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[THE LAST WITNESS.]

## THE FLAW IN THE DIAMOND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlingcourt's Will," "Leaves of Fate," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARK DALY made a morning call the next day at Donnithorne Hall, and was received rather coldly by Sir Anson and his lady, while Ada looked embarrassed and nervous, as if uncertain whether to laugh or cry. It was quite plain she had given her parents a hint of her change of sentiments, and Mark could very well imagine their indignation and resentment. While he was racking his brain for an excuse for breaking into the subject, Mr. Ashton came in, and he, supposing the whole matter had been thoroughly discussed, made a decided break in the ice.

"Well, Sir Anson, I am sure you are as well satisfied now that little Ada's wise heart has made its own choice, and set our plans aside, since she will still be the mistress of Holly Bank."

Sir Anson stared.

"He doesn't know anything about it," whispered Mark; "oh, tell him, Mr. Ashton, and speak a kindly word for me."

Which Morley Ashton did, with such good effect that, in a few moments, the astonished baronet came back, and shaking Mark warmly by the hand, he said:

"It is a great surprise, of course; but Morley says it is all right, and I always trust to him. I'm afraid my little girl thinks I am angry with her. If you like, you may go and tell her that I am ashamed of it, and I shall make it up with her as soon as she wishes."

Mark did not need anything more. In a few moments he and Ada were as happy as any romantic pair of lovers in all the world, out in the conservatory which opened from the sitting-room.

When the party set forth from Ashton Villa for the lawyer's office in Woxley village, Sir Anson, proud and important, drove his future son-in-law in his own carriage, while a second followed, filled with

pillows, containing an attendant and the mysterious invalid.

Had all the carriages which set forth that day for that same rendezvous been drawn up in a line before the dingy, dusty building where the old lawyers made their home, it would have drawn half the town thither in wonderment and curiosity.

The noble company from Chardon Valley had, however, more discretion. Nothing was to be seen of them, when a rather imposing-looking vehicle, with a pair of outriders in livery, drew up before the office.

Mr. Woxley, very elegantly dressed, alighted, and assisted a tall, stately figure, also very richly attired, to the ground, and gave her his arm, as he led her up to the lawyer's office.

A heavily embroidered lace veil concealed the lady's face, but she carried herself with haughty grace. As for the assumed claimant of the Woxley honours, there was a suppressed air of exultation and jubilant delight about him, which betrayed itself in every gesture, in his step, look, and nervous smile. He longed to proclaim to all about him, even to the very menial who opened the coach door for them, that his hour of triumph had come, that his unscrupulous hand closed at length on the prize for which it had worked so long and desperately. The beautiful Euphemia was his own now. He had been as much overjoyed as surprised by her sudden decision, in the midst of his eager description of the panic and consternation of the lawyers, and the undoubted prospect of his speedy and undisputed possession of the Woxley title and estate, by her swift, imperative declaration that he should take her there to that meeting with the Countess Grace, and that she would go as his wife.

He was only too willing to comply. For six years this woman had held him in a blind infatuation, a willing slavery. Had sent him hither and thither upon the most daring, lawless, and criminal deeds. Had held him by a spell tenfold more powerful and absorbing than he could have known in earlier manhood, or have felt for a younger woman. Had ruled him with an autocratic sway, and given little

in return, but those syren smiles and delusive promises. And now she was his own, and was to adorn the grand and beautiful home which her wily plots had assisted him to win. Every pulse tingled and thrilled with proud delight as he stood a moment at the door, looking back, up at the bright sky, down at the glittering equipage and liveried attendant, pressing, with the exultant consciousness of enduring possession, the slender hand which rested on his arm, a hand which only an hour before had been given at the altar into his lifelong keeping.

His keen mind ran swiftly over the circumstances, the web of evidence, which he was so positive could not be refuted. Only one person in England—besides the two confederates who shared his spoil, or his ruin, and therefore were safe from harming him—only one person could have come forward and shown just where the false link was welded in so cunningly, could have laid an accusing hand on his shoulder, and said, bringing the proofs: "Thou art a hypocrite, a false usurper, and a terrible transgressor against the law."

Only one—and that one—this great villain, standing, as he believed, on the very topmost height of worldly success, did not shudder now as he recalled the step he had taken to thrust that one away from his path. He was too exultant in his splendid prospects, too intoxicated with the syren presence beside him. And so, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, and a joyously beating heart, he passed in out of the brightness, into the dingy, dusty room, where a grave circle waited for his appearance.

He felt the gloom and the chill, and unconsciously shivered, the moment he crossed the threshold. His companion, however, warmed with the swift and burning glow of hatred and fierce triumph, arched her head more haughtily, while she flung back her veil, and turned upon the pale, proud face of the Countess Grace her glittering, scornful glance.

"My wife, gentlemen," said the now-colder, blandly, knowing better than to deny her this sweetest sparkle of her triumph; "the rightful Countess of Woxley, gentlemen."

Lady Grace held her hands under her mantle, and



compelled their clanking wrath to give the only vent to the hot tide of passion which this insult sent seething through her heart.

Morley Ashton gave her a sympathising, affectionate glance.

"I think," he said, coldly, "we are here to offer proofs, and refute them, not to bandy idle and boastful assertions."

The assumed count gave him a malicious glance, and answered, sneeringly:

"If the gentleman be interested in this affair, he will know that my proofs have already been presented. If anyone can damage or weaken them, I am ready to see it done. There are some other claims which will not bear such scrutiny."

Morley's proud lip curled, and his heart gave a throb of gratitude and joy that he was beyond this low villain's malice, while he sighed to remember that he had ever stooped to parley with him. He motioned to the senior lawyer, who took up a paper lying before him, and cleared his voice preparatory to reading it.

With a cool, triumphant smile, the assumed count took a seat beside the beautiful Euphemia, whose great eyes shone with a feverish brilliancy, beyond that of the diamond drops which swung at her ears.

She had been biting her lip angrily. Half of her triumph seemed slipping away from her, because she could not compel that pale, worn, faded woman, in the simple gray travelling suit, to look over to her, and be stung by the discovery of her still brilliant and powerful charms. She had thrown off the costly cashmere shawl, to reveal the rich pearl-satin dress with its ruby and diamond buttons. She had arranged and re-arranged the filmy lace under sleeves which only shaded the fair round arms, banded with gems and gold.

She had settled her exquisitely modelled form into an attitude of perfect grace. She knew that the imitable art which she had studied so carefully from a French artist, and practised with so much earnestness and devotion, had hidden every wrinkle and given her a girl's complexion of lily and rose. And now the hated rival had eyes, but would not use them. She did not deign so much notice as to appear to avoid the sight, but she sat still, graceful and quiet, apparently as unconscious of the presence of that brilliant, fascinating picture, as if the Countess Euphemia had been a block of wood or stone.

The latter sat fuming with rage and malice, pondering what she could say or do, to send the deepest pang into the heart of this woman, towards whom years ago, she had sworn such bitter and shuddering vengeance.

The lawyer meanwhile rose, and read aloud the claim presented by the gentleman present, and the copies of his evidence offered in proof of his claim to be the only legal heir of the title and estates of Philip, Count of Woxley.

Mr. James Woxley's own lawyer, who had hitherto remained silent, arose, and stated that the claim had been correctly given, that his client brought the matter up before the parties immediately interested, to give them an opportunity to render justice without the matter being taken up to the court.

"And you are ready to take your solemn oath that your name is James Woxley; that you are the legitimate son of Philip Woxley and one Amelia Boynton, declared to be his legally wedded wife?" said the senior lawyer, sternly, looking full into the eyes of the man who assumed to be the said James Woxley.

He rose, without a sign of tremor or hesitation.

"I do. I certainly do."

Morley Ashton glanced a little nervously behind him. The man had really so changed his looks and dress that it fairly staggered him to believe he could be the low, blustering fellow with the limp, and the hacking cough, who had passed himself off as Mr. A. Frost. He trembled lest the concealed witnesses should be unable to identify him, or that the carefully arranged dénouement should be ruined by the man's consummate duplicity and effrontery.

"Do you deny, sir, that you have appeared here in England under another identity, with a very different name?" he asked.

"I don't know what you refer to. Of course I have not passed as James Woxley, I, who have been so long cheated from my rights, because they were carefully concealed from me. I was brought up under another name," he answered, coolly.

"What was that name?" demanded the lawyer.

"James Wharton," was the prompt reply. "I meant to have had a witness here to-day to prove that, but he has been somehow hindered and detained."

"Perhaps we had best bring forward some of our own," said Morley, and went out, returning a moment after with Mark and Mabel.

James Woxley, as he called himself, kept his countenance with wonderful power. Not a muscle

moved, not a flicker of recognition crossed his eyes. The pair were sworn, and confronted with the man.

"Have you ever seen this man before?"

Mark rubbed his eyes, passed his hand across his forehead, and then stammered:

"I dare not testify."

Mabel only smiled bitterly as she said:

"I am confident enough now, but I should like to have the glasses removed from his eyes, then I shall not have a shadow of a doubt."

The gold-bowed glasses were taken from the elegant gentleman, and those singular eyes, nature's birthmark, made a sensible change in the face. They held an angry, sinister spark in them as they turned upon her.

"Yes, sir, I can swear that I have seen him before. He kept me at his house for several years. I have known him under many names, the latest among them being the Rev. Mr. Whitehead and Colonel Falkinstone. I can testify to his life of wrong-doing, to his capability of enacting any wicked plot," continued Mabel, firmly.

Those peculiar eyes suddenly glowed with a fierce glare.

"Testify what you please," he answered, "it has nothing to do with this case. I also can prove your wickedness. You are my daughter, and not yet free from my control."

"It is false!" cried the Countess Grace, "she never was your daughter. She is mine, only mine."

He laughed derisively.

"Let us have other witnesses," said the lawyer. And immediately old Jeremiah Pendleton, Bob Stone, Tom Halliday, and Dick Manners, with Mike shuffling along in the rear, filled up the centre of the room.

"Who are these ragamuffins?" asked the undaunted man.

"Oh, you vile hypocrite! you wicked murderer! Who are we indeed?" vociferated Tom Halliday, shaking his fist at him.

"Mr. Halliday, you forget yourself and the decorum of this occasion," remarked Jeremiah, waving his hand in authoritative dignity.

"I beg your pardon, Jeremiah. I will leave the rest to you," returned Tom, hanging down his head.

"We come, sir, to testify to a wicked deed. This man before you has dared to invade his wicked company into an honourable and respectable circle," said Jeremiah, with deliberate accents. "And he has dared to do so as he deserved. He was by the name of A. Frost, in our place. A little back-killing Frost, certainly."

Here Jeremiah paused, and smiled around him in grim recognition of his own witticism.

"I never heard the name before," exclaimed James, Count Woxley.

"What was A. Frost like?" asked the presiding lawyer.

"Not a bit like this man. He had grayish hair, and whiskers, he limped, and coughed; but we watched him put himself into these clothes, drop the cough, and stretch out of the limp. We've watched him every minute for three days. We saw him get those diamond ear-rings for the lady there—"

The villain showed the first sign of vulnerability at this. He gave a slight start, and began biting angrily upon his lip.

Jeremiah looked over to him with withering contempt.

"He is the same man, sir, we four here can swear to it, and we ask you to keep him until the officer comes with a warrant to arrest him for murder."

"That's a likely story," retorted the accused, in great indignation; but everyone saw how bloodless grew his lips and cheeks. "Whose murder, you old idiot? Can there be a murder without somebody being killed?"

"The murder of a woman—a woman who was made insensible by some drug, and then thrust into a chest and locked down, and left there to die of suffocation."

"Where's your proof? and where's the body?" reiterated the wretched man.

"You think you put it safely out of sight when you dropped the chest over into the water from the house on the wharf," continued Jeremiah; "but murder cannot be hidden, man, and your wicked deed is known."

Great drops of perspiration gathered on the man's forehead, his lips twitched spasmodically, but he still essayed to brave the whole.

"I know nothing of your Mr. Frost," said he; "if he has been guilty of murder, find him, and take him to gaol. I am James Woxley, here in this place to demand my right, not to be cheated by this juggler."

"Then," said Mark Daly, starting towards the door, "there must be another witness—still another to confront this man."

"Who now?" muttered the accused, glaring about him fiercely.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

A slow, feeble step came nearer the threshold; a wan, white face, a tottering form crossed, and came through the opening door.

A ghost could scarcely have had a ghastlier appearance.

The bold man's sullen obstinacy gave way now. With a wild cry of horror and terror, he rushed to the end of the room, and hid himself away from those steady accusing eyes.

"Horror of horrors! Ruth Weston, her ghost or her living self, it does not matter which," he screamed.

"I am ruined! I am ruined!"

Yes, Ruth Weston at last—the much-sought, the feared, the longed-for—Ruth Weston had come. Mark lent her his strong, young arm. The Countess Grace hastily vacated her seat, and the feeble remnant of a woman strong, self-reliant, and heroic woman was seated in it tenderly.

The mild, meek eyes looked around the group with only assuming a look of horror and anger as they fell upon the woman Euphemia, who sat there in all her glory and false bloom, with wild, glaring eyes, like those of a crouching tigress, betraying all the demoniac rage within her heart.

Ruth Weston lifted her hand, and placed it on the sacred volume, and her eyes upward, as she took the solemn oath.

"I am to testify to the other world," she said, solemnly, "to give a word from him to light and shade. I have, besides, promised him to witness his own death."

Utter silence followed this terrible statement, and Jonathan could not speak.

"My name is Ruth Weston. I have known that man, who is sitting out and waiting, responsible to him my name, since I was a little child. His name is James Storm. He is the son of John Storm, who was sentenced for twenty years in Australia for housebreaking, and, after his wife, who followed to Sydney, and left him child with an American. I have heard the story a dozen times. James Storm was a playmate of mine in my childhood, and a constant companion, and grew up towards manhood. I have promised to tell the truth, so I must not withhold that I was once so fond and anxious to love him devotedly. He sought my hand in marriage, obtained such powerful connections as a girl, that I consented to a secret union, when I found my parents obstinately opposed to the match. Heaven knows I had no suspicion then of the base nature of the man."

"I was afraid of my father's anger, and as James Storm seemed willing, I continued in my position as lady's maid to the Countess, and kept my maiden name. I saw him frequently. There was an out-of-the-way place, a farm away from any road, where a cousin of his kept house, and which he called his home. I went there to meet him as often as he sent for me, because I preferred it to losing my good name with my mistress."

"The time came when I was as anxious to have the marriage proclaimed, as I had hitherto been to keep it from my father's knowledge, and then the mask was dropped, and I learned a portion of his villainy. He confessed to me that there was no legality in our marriage. That he had forged the certificates, and hired a mock clergyman, all, he admitted, because he wished to be revenged upon my family for their opposition."

"It is useless for me to tell you how all my giddy girlhood dropped away from me, how I suffered, and writhed, and agonised, for I had come from an honest family, whose name had never known a taint of dishonour. I begged and implored him to make the marriage a legal one, while yet it was possible to save me from the world's scorn. He promised fairly enough, and miserable dupe that I was, I believed that, when certain conditions were fulfilled, he would consent. I left my situation and hid myself there at that lonely place. I cannot tell you how I sickened, and faltered, but had not courage to escape, when I came to learn the worthless character of the man I loved, and of this woman, his cousin. I knew, soon enough, of their lawless doings, their unscrupulous ways, their greedy determination to heap up wealth."

"I guessed the secret of James Storm's well-filled pockets and idle life, when I came to know of the gang of evil men who made the farm their rendezvous; and when one day I saw great hand-bills on the fences, detailing the enormities of a great robbery at the town bank, and offering a reward for the detection of the thieves, my heart sank like a lump of lead, for I remembered then that he had gone out at midnight, and returned home exultant and defiant. I searched out my proofs—Why do I linger to tell you such a story? I took



my child and went away, no longer wishing to give it the name of such a man. I told you my girlhood dropped away from me, it almost seemed to me that womanliness followed. I was so stern, and grim, and grave. I, who must be father and mother both to the poor little weakling, felt myself called upon to take also the work of both.

"I set myself a task. I laughed to scorn my old weakness and daintiness. There was no honest work, however rough and hard, that I did not set myself to do. I did a woman's task throughout the day, and then half the night I dragged wood and coal like a man. I brought up my daughter tenderly, and put her to the best schools, working my fingers to the bone to do it, but warming back my frozen heart to life in that very hardship. She was so sweet, fair, and gifted, I would not sully her pure soul with the story of her own and her mother's wrongs. I made up a family history; it was near enough the truth to answer. I put her to lodge with a worthy lady, but all the while I kept a jealous watch on James Storm. I had but one fear, that he would find me out, and steal the child, or, after she grew up, stab her gentle heart with the bitter truth, which I so jealously guarded away from her.

"Ah me! ah me!" I said, "there should come no sorrow to her. My Alice, my sweet, sweet Alice!" I was a cruel mother, and, not knowing it, dealt myself the potion which poisoned her young life. I was keeping house for Paul Barker, and I had Alice frequently to see me. I saw his cold eye brighten every time the fair young face came into the house. I knew no harm of the man. He was respectable and rich—so rich; and for my Alice I would only have the luxurious home she deserved. And I was tired and worn with my work, my hard struggle to keep her in her pretty home there. Paul Barker was the first who hinted about the gay young lover. I sought out the facts with the fierce rage of a panther whose young are straying amidst the snares.

"Paul Barker deceived me. Morley Ashton, take this extortion from me. He made me believe you were wild, unprincipled, and brutal. And I was so afraid of my darling's tender heart being turned to gall as mine had been that I helped him. Heaven looking down upon me, knows how bitterly I have repented!" I allowed him to deceive her also, to forge a wicked letter, which would cast endless dishonour upon the young lover, and then I took my drooping lily, and gave it to Paul Barker. I thought gold, jewels, and luxury would revive the drooping blossom. Woe is me! It was but giving her to the pitiless hail. You found your way, Morley Ashton, to Holly Bank, and revealed the truth to her. I have hated you for it with a bitter hatred, and yet I am not sure now, that the trouble would not have come without your help.

"Paul Barker's nature was cruel, bitter cruel, and insanely jealous. Who knows what other event might not have roused that slumbering demon in his nature? His fury and rage were beyond anything I have ever known. He thrust her forth from his house, she who was so soon to be the mother of a child. He bade me follow—unless I promised never to speak her name in his presence. As if I, who had ventured so much, would leave my darling alone in such a strait! I spoke some bitter truths to him, and carried her to a woman I had heard was about to take a child to nurse. I watched over her tenderly, but I saw, with a stricken heart, that she had lost her old trust in me. She knew that I had helped towards her destruction. She was not angry or unkind. She would only sit, hours and hours, with drooping head, and crossed arms, looking down on a miniature she had somehow secreted from our knowledge, the miniature, Morley Ashton, you gave her. Do you think I did not understand what it meant, when Mark told me all his heart seemed to yearn towards you? How he could not be angry or indignant, could never help loving you, whatever you might do! It was born with him, indeed!

"Well, she died, when the babe was born. My poor blighted lily was at peace, and I was left alone again, with a feeble infant. The woman I had hired took it to nurse with the other, and I returned to Paul Barker's. I think he was glad to have me back. I told him the truth, and asked him what should be done for his son. I shall never forget his burst of fury. Then he showed me what he had done. He had obliterated every trace of his marriage, circumstances aiding him strangely. Let me say what I might, it would be of no use, for the clergyman was dead, the marriage certificate gone, the very record in the church destroyed.

"I was stunned and bewildered, but I had hope that time would melt his iron heart, and I remained with him, making my secret visits to the child, and using every possible means to work upon his conscience and his affection. I had stronger hope, after I discovered that he had been himself to look at the

babe. The woman told me about it. How a man had come in and taken the two children on his knee, and behaved so strangely that she had been afraid of him. I found out for a certainty that it was Paul Barker, and from that moment I knew his secret heart yearned to the boy.

"I knew why he was so ready to give me a holiday, to urge my visits away, and I was never afraid to stay there and help the woman with the children. She told me the history of the other babe, and showed me the mark on its little wrist, and we wondered together what it meant. One day I came upon her suddenly, how well I remember it, and found her crying. Mark was only three weeks old that day, and the other little wee creature, though a fortnight older, was not half so stout and large. I asked kindly about her trouble, but she would only confess that a disagreeable man was coming, and then she muttered something about his strange eyes. That one hint set me upon the watch. There were but one pair of eyes, to my knowledge, that could be so described. Was that dreadful man coming at this late hour to find out my hiding-place, and the babe of Alice?

"I took the children in the same cradle as I had often done, and carried them out into the warm summer-house, and while she thought I was tending them, I left them asleep, and crept back to the house and listened. For I heard her visitor arrive. Then I learned a vile plot. The little babe, with the strange mark on its wrist, was to be spirited away, and a dead child, with that same mark, sent to its mother. It was his voice, I could never forget it. And a wild, fierce creature was with him—you see her yonder, little changed."

Ruth Weston put out her hand, without deigning to turn her head towards Euphemia.

"I was full of my own troubles, and I dared not do anything to bring his attention upon me. But I said I would help to alter the matter sometime. And with that view, after they had gone, I took in the children, and sending off the woman, who was glad enough to go and hide the dead babe he had brought, I took the poor little arm, and set myself to studying the mark so that I should be able to remember it. And while I was about it, I saw a cake of Indian ink and a fine needle and brush lying on the table. And I said it would be a fine thing for me to insure the identity of my babe, against his father's machinations, and keep also a *fac simile* of the little girl's mark."

"So I laid the two little wrists side by side, and I copied from one to the other, as well as I could, and put an obscure figure 2 under Mark's, that I might be able to be positive about my work, should any accident remove him from my sight."

"It is enough! It is enough!" shrieked the Countess Grace. "Oh, my darling! oh, my daughter, I knew my heart had not mistaken!"

Mabel was weeping softly in her arms, and Morley and Mark smiling joyously upon them.

"Have you any strength to go on?" asked Mark, as he saw the speaker falter and close her eyes.

"But little more is to be told. Your father did repent. He promised me solemnly that his death should give you restitution. Let Mr. Ashton explain the rest."

"It is explained," answered Mark; "they all know how I found the book in that wonderful way in the good ship Iuo's cabin, and have only just learned its value. My father's confession is there, the certificate of his marriage, his will, and the missing leaf of the register, which relieves the Countess Grace of all her anxieties and doubts."

"And what is all this to us!" exclaimed the clear, ringing voice of the angry Euphemia, "let this woman have her daughter. Much good may she find in a disgraced and poverty-stricken name! Do you think this poor driveller's hatched-up story will disprove the claim of James, the true Count of Woxley?"

"Woman," thundered the lawyer, "do you want farther proof? Take it then. Do you know one Sydney, who has passed under the name of Falkinstone? He was found yesterday, in a house he entered feloniously, dying of injuries received from the discharge of a loaded pistol in his hand. He was pursuing an innocent girl, who was flying from his wicked threats, and he stumbled over a wall, and discharged his own pistol. He had strength to crawl back to Abiatha Broad's house, and then he was found dying."

"Dying!" shrieked the woman, "Sydney dying!" Wicked, hard-hearted, pitiless as she had been, she had yet a mother's heart in her bosom.

"Yes, dying, and thus dying, he has made full confession of the long and adroit plotting which was to have given to you and him the control of two magnificent fortunes. That confession, sworn and witnessed, destroys the last hope for Mr. James Woxley, alias Whitehead, alias Falkinstone, really Storm."

The wretched woman sprang up and then fell back, beating the empty air with clenched hands, amidst wild peals of hysterical laughter, and frightful sobs. James Storm rushed across the room to her side, but she struck at him fiercely.

"Away—away—you are a poor dupe. I only flattered you to use you as a stepping-stone. I loathe, I despise, I abhor you. I only loved Sydney, oh! my poor boy! my only child."

They carried her away, shrieking and struggling. James Storm, with head drooping low upon his breast, completely crestfallen and overwhelmed, went out, also under guard. One died by self-administered poison. The other was sent away to Australia. Neither appeared again.

The rest, shocked by this awful scene from any loud expression of their own happiness, gathered around Ruth Weston's chair, talking in low, hushed tones.

She looked worn and spent, but smiled serenely upon Mark.

"Do you see," she asked, presently; "do you know how that mark on your wrist mystified James Storm also? He ferreted out the story of the other babe, and learned that it was the child of the rich owner of Holly Bank, but, till he heard this story to-day, he did not know that it was Mark instead of Mabel who was heir to Holly Bank. He never knew the sex of the two children, and believed that Sydney, by marrying Mabel, would get Holly Bank, while Mark, he made sure, was the son of the Countess Woxley. It was the nurse of the countess who brought the child, and the two babes, dressed alike, with the same mark on the wrist, when he came the second time, were so much alike, it had puzzled a better judge than he to tell them apart by the faces; and the woman, with her guilty conscience with regard to the reputed death of the heir of Woxley, was willing to help the mistake on. But the mystery is ended now. The child of my Alice will have his rights. The countess rejoices in her daughter."

"A blissful, blissful ending," said Mabel. "Oh, Ruth Weston, there is one more good thing for you to do. In the midst of these happy discoveries I am longing for the pleasant smile and benignant glance of my generous friend and benefactor. Tell me what has become of Abiatha Broad."

Ruth Weston took in hers the fair hands stretched out to her.

"Dear child," said she, "shall you grieve when I tell you that you will never see poor Abiatha again?"

"Never see my kind, good friend? Oh! it was true, then, that some terrible thing had come to him. I feared it when I saw the deserted rooms."

She was drawn still closer.

"Dear, tender-hearted child, can you not understand? When poor Ruth Weston, helpless and stupefied, was thrust into that awful chest to die, her friend Abiatha was also consigned to the same woful fate. But when these brave gentlemen rescued the nearly dead woman, and, by earnest and persistent efforts, restored a feeble flicker of life, Abiatha came not forth at all."

"He is dead, oh, he is dead," said Mabel, dearly. Mark kissed her, and laughed at Morley Ashton's astonished face.

"Bell, darling, don't waste your grief. Ruth Weston and Abiatha Broad are one!"

There was a slight cry from Mabel, and then she had her arms around Ruth Weston's neck, sobbing there for joy, until the Countess Grace said, kindly:

"Mabel, my child, you will tire our generous friend. We must take her home with us to Woxley Hall. It must be her home henceforward."

"Her home, indeed!" ejaculated Mark; "what do you think I shall ever take possession of Holly Bank, if she is not there? You forget she is my own—my mother and grandmother, both in one. No more hardship and blackening toil for these dear hands—no more exposure to peril—no more mystery. She is to be—after Ada—the lady of Holly Bank."

His eyes moistened, his voice quivered.

And Ruth Weston smiled tenderly, and answered: "Yes, I belong to Mark. I am only Mark's. And if it seems hard that Woxley Hall should have but its two fair ladies, yonder stands a noble gentleman—you see I give him his due at last—a noble gentleman, who in those fair halls will not be able to regret the loss of Holly Bank."

Mabel shrank from sight, and hid her scarlet cheeks on her mother's shoulder, but the countess, while she folded one arm around her recovered daughter, held out the other warmly.

"Morley, dear Morley, you loved her when she was friendless and unknown. I shall be proud to give her to you as the heiress of Woxley Hall."

Upon which there was a little aside grinning of the *dramatis personae*, and in the midst of it, Sir Anson brought in Ada Donithorne, with a most radiant face, which occasioned the prettiest tableau of the whole, for Mark Daly led the fair young crea-

ture of his choice forth for the blessing of pale-faced, dove-eyed Ruth Weston, who put both tremulous hands upon the golden curls in solemn blessing. And then all the company set forth for Holly Bank, to which sundry servants had been mysteriously despatched by Morley Ashton's order. And it was quite dark when they arrived at the gateway, and lo, as if by magic, straightway, upon their appearance in the avenue, every pane of the quaint old windows, and every graceful arch and stately pillar was suddenly lit up and traced in glittering lines of coloured light, and over the door were the words, with shimmering letters of fire.

"Welcome to the heir! Hail to the master!"

And Morley Ashton gently thrust Mark forward, and he, with pretty Ada clinging to his arm, entered the old hall first of all, bowed his agitated thanks for the greeting of the servants gathered there, and scarcely obtained his usual calmness until the carriage, which had brought Ruth Weston by slow and easy stages, arrived, and he had seen her comfortable in one of the best chambers in the house.

Perhaps as pleasant an incident as could have happened occurred just as the evening closed. Sir Anson rode over after supper to the neighbouring inn, to find a messenger from home. He came back with two young gentlemen in his train.

"Mark, my boy, where are you? I found these two good fellows domiciled at the old inn, and when they said they knew you, I wouldn't have your new hospitality shamed, and therefore brought them."

"Nat Wilkinson and Joe Wardwell, as I live!" exclaimed Mark, holding out his hand warmly. "Nothing could be pleasanter than your appearance. Thanks, indeed, Sir Anson, for your discovery."

"Well, to be sure, Mark, this is rather unexpected; it isn't much like your talk to us."

"And yet all this happiness of mine arose from my passage in the Ino. Do you remember the queer old book? It was that which gave me my rights here. I am sure you are glad with me, my friends. Come down to the dining-room, and let us drink to continued and prosperous voyages to the good old ship!"

"Oh," laughed Joe, "I am in the firm now, and don't go on a trip so often; and as for Ned there—I'll let you into a pretty secret. He's in a good situation there in town; but he has taken a trick of slipping away at most unreasonably frequent intervals. I question what's it for, neither can I tell you; but I can tell you what he carried with him on this trip—a gold ring, Mark, a lady's gold ring! Now if you can't make it out, and I can't, I expect we shall have to wait until Mrs. Wardwell can."

"The same old Wilkinson!" exclaimed Mark, as he joined in the hearty chorus of laughter. "I think my cup is quite complete to-night, through Sir Anson's bringing you two hither, who have known me in my poverty and friendlessness. And now you must let me introduce you to Miss Donithorne."

Wilkinson gave a sly pull to his arm, before they had reached the lady.

"I say, Mark, is there a ring in this case?"

Mark could only smile, and colour in the old style, only there was no pain or humiliation with it now.

There had been a ring on Ada Donithorne's finger. She had carried it in her pocket for several days, waiting for a chance to give it back to Morley Ashton, and while Mark was down in the dining-room with his friends, she had found the opportunity.

It had only required a word or two, and a shy glance.

"I know very well you think with me, it is the happiest thing in the world, Morley, and—if you please will you take it—with my blessing to someone else."

And Morley, with the ring in his hand, and a troubled, thoughtful look on his face, found the youthful Lady Mabel standing in a bay window, looking out dreamily at the play of the illuminations on the lawn.

She turned, with a bright smile, towards the intruder.

"Ah, Morley, what an eventful day. And how beautiful an ending!"

And then her eyes dropped suddenly, for she caught the shimmer of the rainbow in his hand.

"It is Ada's ring," he said, abruptly; "she bade me bring it to you, but I do not mean it. I must have another, would you mind if I put into it a single pearl, the purest and loveliest I can find, but only a pearl? I cannot bear to associate diamonds with you, Mabel, you, the noblest, purest, and truest among women, as the pearl is among gems! I am overwhelmed at my audacity in daring to ask any betrothal at all—I, who have shown to you my sin. And yet I know your forgiveness is as generous and angelic as your nature."

Mabel looked up quickly, a shy, glad smile breaking over her face.

"Will you give me what I ask, Morley?"

"How could I help it, dear, though it were for a gem still hiding in its earthly prison?"

The answer was deep and earnest.

"Give me, then, what I have learned to honour and value most—the ring with the Flaw in the Diamond."

THE END.

## SCIENCE.

**MINING IN PRUSSIA.**—The statistics relating to mining in Prussia show the surprising progress made by that country during the last twenty years in this industry by the introduction of improved systems of extraction by the use of steam power. In 1837 there were 1,587 mines worked in Prussia, giving employment to 33,161 miners. In 1867 this number had increased to 2,162, with 48,351 miners. The total value of the mineral production, which in 1837 was 838,932*l.*, in 1867 amounted to upwards of 8,565,000*l.*

**WINTER WEATHER.**—There have been years in which no frost and snow whatever were seen. In 1172, so mild was the season that the trees were covered with leaves, and the birds built their nests and hatched their young in the month of February. In 1289 there was no winter, and in 1421 white blossoms were to be seen on the ordinary trees in March, and on the vine in April; cherries ripened in the latter month, and the grape in May. 1538 the gardens were bright with flowers in January; 1572 was like 1102; and 1607, 1612, and 1617 were remarkable for their genial temperature. Neither ice nor snow was visible in 1659; no stoves were lit in Germany in 1692; and the softness of the weather in 1791, 1807, and 1822 rendered those years quite phenomenal.

### PHOSPHORUS IN CAST-IRON.

WHILE the question of phosphorus and its effects on iron is being discussed in London, the following method of examination employed by a French metallurgist, M. V. Tantin, deserves notice.

M. Tantin says: "It is well known that very small quantities of phosphorus produce no sensible alteration in the quality of cast-iron, whereas if the proportion exceeds a few thousand parts the iron is robbed of its most essential qualities. It is very important, therefore, to ascertain the exact amount of phosphorus present. Nearly all the methods in use for this purpose consist in treating the iron by means of oxidising agents, so as to cause the phosphorus to pass into the condition of phosphoric acid, which is precipitated in the state of a magnesian compound. Several causes of error exist in this treatment, for (1), a part of the phosphorus escapes the action of the agents, and disengages itself in the form of an hydrogenous compound. (2) It is necessary to act upon very diluted solutions, to prevent the ammoniacal-magnesian phosphate mixing with the oxide of iron, in which case it is difficult to collect the small amount of phosphate deposited on the sides of the vessel in which the precipitate is made. (3) The arsenic which may be contained in the iron enters into the magnesian precipitate in the form of arseniate as insoluble as the phosphate."

"In order to avoid these objections, I tried to attain my object by a directly opposite road, that is to say, in disengaging the phosphorus in the form of an hydrogenous compound, but then arose the question whether the whole of the phosphorus passed into the form of a gaseous product. This was, however, proved by the fact that no trace of phosphorus was ever to be found in the residuum after the iron had been completely acted upon by hydrochloric acid. This result ought to cause no surprise, considering the very energetic affinity which phosphorus has for hydrogen. The phosphuretted hydrogen produced by the action of hydrochloric acid on iron is almost always accompanied by sulphuretted, arseniated, and carbonated hydrogen. In order to effect the separation of these gases, they may be made to pass first through a Wolf's bottle containing a solution of potash, which absorbs the sulphuretted hydrogen; then through a solution of nitrate of silver, which transforms the arseniated hydrogen into arsenite of silver soluble in the liquid become slightly acid, while phosphuretted hydrogen precipitates the argentine solution and forms insoluble phosphorus. The phosphorus being thus absolutely separated from the sulphur and the arsenic, its amount is ascertained with the greatest ease; the phosphure of silver is treated with nitro-muriatic acid, and thus transformed into chlorure of silver and phosphoric acid, which is precipitated in the form of ammoniacal-magnesian phosphate. This precipitate, when calcined, gives the proportion of the phosphorus to the iron."

"In order to obtain the whole of the phosphorus the following precautions must be observed: Let the iron be attacked gradually, otherwise a portion of the phosphuretted hydrogen may traverse the solu-

tion of nitrate of silver without being absorbed. And when the action on the iron is finished, pass through the apparatus a stream of hydrogen which has previously been washed in acetate of lead."

"The solution of potash contains all the sulphur which was present in the iron treated, and in order to ascertain the quantity of that substance the solution must be treated with acetate of lead; the precipitate produced is at first a mixture of oxide and sulphite of lead, but the oxide is soon redissolved and the sulphite alone remains. The precipitate must be collected in a filter, washed with distilled water, and completely dried before being weighed."

**THE PHOTOGRAPHIC GRAPHOMETER.**—This is rather an ingenious apparatus designed by M. Chevallier, of Paris, who calls it a photogrammeter. It is destined to record the angular position of objects situated around a given point. It is self-recording or automatic, and very simple in construction, so that it can be easily used, even by persons who are unskilled in photography. The record is made by means of a kind of photographic camera, the ordinary objective of which is mounted vertically on a circular platform capable of rotating, by means of clockwork, in a horizontal plane. The image is formed on a horizontal plane, for the rays are deflected 90 deg. by a prism after they have passed through the objective. The sensitive surface over which they fall is a collodionised glass plate, the centre of which corresponds with the point at which the centre point of the diaphragm would be represented. To prevent a number of confused images, superimposed upon each other, being formed during the rotation of the objective, an opaque screen, having a narrow oblong opening, the medium line of which passes through the axis of rotation, is placed over the whole of the sensitised surface, and revolves along with the objective. The result of this arrangement is the production on the sensitised plate of images of the different points that lie around the observer; the angles formed by lines joining the centre of the instrument and the objects themselves. The position of the objects thus accurately obtained may be transferred to paper in the ordinary way. As different velocities of rotation may be suited to different purposes, three different degrees of velocity may be obtained by means of a regulator, and as it may be desirable sometimes to reproduce only certain points of the panorama, an arrangement is made which permits the attainment of this object. If it is requisite to observe not different points, but successive changes of the same point, the objective and the screen are disconnected, so that only the latter revolves; the successive appearances of the same point are then recorded in succession in a circle round the sensitised plate.

**ECCENTRICITIES OF AN ENGLISH NOBLEMAN.**—For some time past a young English nobleman, who appears to have made France his home, or who at least passes most of his time there, has got himself talked of on account of his gay doings and his eccentricities. It is recorded that he lost 4,000*l.* in gambling, at one sitting, to a female; that he hired the whole of a theatre for himself and a party of friends, and would allow no one else to attend the performance and that he has taken to driving four donkeys in his carriage.

**THE DECORATIONS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.**—Mr. Crace is at work in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords completing the decoration, which has been left unfinished by Sir Charles Barry. Four out of the eight statues, for which niches are provided, are finished, and are now being fixed in their places. The statues are in stone, by Mr. J. Birnie Philip, of the following monarchs:—Alfred, William I., Richard I., Edward III., Henry V., Elizabeth, William III., and Anne, who have been selected as representing the great wars of English history, according to the principle indicated by the choice of the subjects of Waterloo and Trafalgar for the pictures by MacIise painted on the side walls. The statues are to be gilt with dead gold, varied in shades, and toned down by picking out with dark colour parts of the dress and ornaments. In the adjoining apartment, the Queen's Robing-room, Mr. Dyce's frescoes have been repaired by Mr. C. H. Cope, R.A., and the decoration of the room has been completed. The ceiling, which is panelled, has been painted and gilt statues of English Princesses have been placed in the niches, and a panel behind the throne has been filled with embroidery representing the Royal arms, with the cyphers V.R., on crimson velvet. The upper panels in the wall framing were left unfinished at the time of Sir C. Barry's death, and they are now about to be filled with bas-reliefs in oak by Mr. H. H. Armistead. The bas-reliefs are about 2ft high, and of various lengths. They represent scenes from the "Morte d'Arthur," in accordance with the subjects of Mr. Dyce's frescoes of the exploits of the Knights of the Round Table.





[THE PEDLAR AND HIS BURTHEN.]

## FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE BANKER'S SECRET.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

DARKNESS reigned o'er nature. The hills, valleys, and rivers were all clothed in the sable hue, unrelieved even by one little star. The sighing of the wind through the branches of the trees, and the low rippling of the waters as they rolled on, were the only sounds that broke the stillness that prevailed.

'Twas the solemn hour of midnight. All within and without the little cottage was immersed in quietude. Mother and son were enclosed in the arms of the dreamy god; and Walter, as he slept, was living o'er again the incidents of the day, seeing himself mounting the ladder of fame, his paintings adorning prominent art galleries, and his name in everybody's mouth, while wealth, happiness, and renown made him the happiest of men, and blessed his mother's declining years.

Ah, Walter, those were beautiful dreams; but, alas! they were only dreams, and made the awakening more bitter; as all delusions only serve to make the cold, hard realities of life more difficult to bear.

A smile hovered o'er his features as his dream became more vivid, and delighted his senses with the glorious picture of life which he saw before him, rose-tinted and charming.

He was aroused very suddenly from his lethargic enchantment by a loud knocking. He rubbed his eyes, rose partially up, and then concluded that he must have been dreaming again.

"Ah," he murmured, "'twas but another delusive vision, and yet so lovely. I wake up only to find myself in my little room, and the same realities of life staring me in the face. If—"

His farther soliloquy was interrupted by another series of knocks, and these more determined than the first.

"Who can it be," he mused, "and at this time of night?"

"Walter!" cried his mother from her chamber across the passage, "did you hear that knocking?"

"Yes," he answered. "Shall I go down?"

Again the noise began, and continued for a moment, with increased force.

"Look and see what is wanted; then, if necessary, you had better descend."

He opened his window, peered out into the darkness, and shouted:

"Who goes there? What is wanted?"

In an instant he received the following characteristic reply:

"I didn't know but what you were dead. I've been knocking here for a considerable space of time. I've got a load here, and should like to see it safely housed. I—"

"Who are you?" said Walter, interrupting him in his loquacity.

"Why, I'm Josh Simpkins. I belong across the stream. Come, let a fellow in; you need not be afraid. I'm as innocent as a lamb."

Walter waited to hear no more, but hastily robing himself, and putting his stiletto, the only weapon he possessed, into his pocket, in case the individual should prove treacherous, he went below and opened the door.

"Why, what means this?" ejaculated Walter, in amazement, as he saw not only one, but two.

"You'll let me put this young feller where he can stretch himself. I'll answer all your questions; as it is, I don't feel like talking, for this chap is heavy. I've brought him a considerable distance."

"Come in, come in," said Walter, knowing by a glance at the rough, jovial face that he had an honest man to deal with.

The stranger entered, and Walter immediately lighted a larger lamp.

As the gleams fell upon the form which the stranger had carried in his stout arms, Walter exclaimed:

"Who is he, and whence came these wounds?"

"You wait a little, youngster, and don't smother a feller with questions afore he has time to get his breath. Get a smelly-bottle, if you have one in the house, and we will make him tell who he is, I don't know."

"You don't know?" replied Walter, with growing astonishment.

"No, of course I don't; but don't waste time gabbing, he's in rather a dangerous condition."

"Certainly; I am wrong to linger," returned Walter. "I will call my mother."

In all trouble, confusion, or in any situation where he dared not trust himself to act, his first words were: "I'll call, or I'll ask my mother."

As he moved towards the door, to carry his project into execution, the man sang out:

"Look here, you're crazy—come back here!"

Walter met his mother upon the stairs. She had heard cries, and surmising that her assistance might be required, had accordingly dressed.

"What is it, Walter?" she asked.

"I hardly know, you shall see for yourself directly."

The two entered.

The eyes of the *soi-disant* pedlar rested for an instant upon the face of Mrs. Dalvano. He paled; through the mammoth whiskers the muscles around his mouth could be seen to twitch nervously. He turned his head that his perturbation might not be perceived, and after a short struggle with himself, he sufficiently regained his self-possession to turn and address her in his peculiar, though respectful manner.

She did not ask any questions; but brought water and some brandy which she had saved to be used when occasion should require.

With the former the young man's brow was bathed, and it was ascertained that he had a severe wound upon the head, and another above the elbow joint in the left arm from the effects of a bullet.

A little brandy was forced down his throat, and all the means at their command were brought into requisition to restore him.

While this was going on, the pedlar, at Mrs. Dalvano's request, gave the facts of the case as follows:

"Well, you see, I was comin' along the road, near Pinky's woods, as they are called, when I thought I heard a call. I walked along a little farther, thinkin' it must be my crazy old head, that's always catchin' up something to bother me, and I vowed I wouldn't think no more of it. At last I said to myself, says I, 'Joshua Simpkins, if you don't go to them woods and find out what that noise is, you'll blame yourself for the rest of your life.' And back I went, though I was in great danger of breaking my head, for it was very dark; but I didn't care, and kept on. As I got farther in 'twas dark as Egypt, and I scratched my eyes nearly out. But I didn't care for that; Joshua Simpkins ain't the man to stop when he means to go ahead. For a minnit I saw a flash, it came and went as quick as lightning, but it showed me I wasn't on a foolish errand, and I followed as near as I could the direction the light came from."

"Then I stopped and listened. I heard voices. In a moment I heard a pistol shot, and saw the flash. I caught up a stick I had stumbled over, and crawled on carefully. I thought, 'here's a feller creature in danger, and Joshua you must get him out.' Then I heard voices again, and near to me too. The light shone up a little, and I saw two murder-looking chaps, with their heads together. At a tree a dozen yards off, was this young man tied. They were whispering together, and I could hear 'em say: 'We have got to kill him and torture him.'"

"When I heard them words, I was so mad my hair stood straight. I didn't think any longer, but I sprang out quick, and gave one a blow over the head with

my stick, at the same time yelling, to make 'em think I had a crowd with me, 'come on, boys!'

"The fellers was as surprised as if an earthquake had shook their hats off, and one on 'em run as fast as he could, only stoppin' to hit this poor feller 'cross the head. Then I went to the poor feller what was tied to the tree. He had swooned away. I picked up the lantern as the man that run had dropped, and by the light cut the cords that held him. I throwed him over my shoulder, and marched up to this house, and began knocking on your door for you; then your son come and let me in. That, mum, is my story. It ain't told in good language, for I never went to school a great deal, but there it is."

"It comes from your heart, Mr. Simpkins, and your face shows that you have a good one. Your act was noble and praiseworthy."

"There, there, mum, don't praise me, please. I only did what one human creature should do for another."

"He does not seem to improve. I wish we could get a physician, though I suppose it is impossible to-night."

She had hardly ceased speaking before the young man opened his eyes and looked about him in astonishment.

"Do you feel any better?" asked Mrs. Dalvane.

"Yes; but who are you, and why am I here?"

"You are among friends. Do not talk much—you are too weak."

"You see this gentleman?" said Mrs. Dalvane, directing his attention to Joshua.

"Which one?" murmured the sufferer, dreamily.

"The bearded one. He is it that rescued you from the jaws of death."

A warm glow passed over his features, and by an effort, he extended his right hand. The other grasped it, and he said:

"My friend, you have saved my life. The greatest service one human being can render another. Accept my most heartfelt thanks; you shall have something more substantial than that as—"

"Now look here, mister. What's your name, don't you talk no such stuff as that to Josh, for Josh won't hear it. All I want you to do is to get well, do you understand?"

"I think I do," replied the wounded man, with a faint smile, and then added: "You are a noble fellow, and if you will rely on me as a friend, I shall be pleased."

"That's it, that's it, who-ever-you-be, now you've been and gone and done it. That's the way to talk."

And Joshua Simpkins wound up his garrulous speech by a squeeze of the hand, which seemed to pain the invalid, for his facial muscles contracted, and he bit his lip.

"Now, Mr. Simpkins, do you think there is any possibility of procuring a physician?" queried Mrs. Dalvane. "His wounds need dressing."

"I don't know, mum, whether I can or not, but one thing is certain, I will; if there is one we'll have him."

And the rough yeoman crushed his hat down upon his carotid head, and with long strides, left the house.

By the help of Walter, Mrs. Dalvane gently raised the young man, and very tenderly removed his coat and vest. He looked up with an expression that repaid her; it was kind and full of gratitude.

Then she temporarily dressed the wound upon his arm—it was a flesh one—and then sat down to wait for the return of their garrulous friend.

They did not have to wait long. In half the time they expected, he returned with an old man, a physician who resided about a half-mile away.

"Mrs. Dalvane, I believe," said the old gentleman, advancing, and politely greeting her. "I have heard of you, but I believe this is our first meeting."

"It is—yes, sir. I am gratified to meet you."

"Now, about our young man here. My friend, Josh, as he obliged me to call him, has told me the incidents—very strange, very romantic. Glad he has fallen into such good hands," ejaculated the merry doctor, with a slight pause at the end of each clause.

"Do you think him seriously injured, doctor?" observed Mrs. Dalvane anxiously, for her heart responded to him who was in trouble or suffering.

The doctor bent down, looked at the young man, at his wounds, and then said, meanwhile vigorously rubbing his hands:

"Humph! He's all right; strong constitution, strong as iron—wounds slight—very—we'll have him on horseback in three days—never fear."

"Oh, I am very glad your words are so encouraging," remarked Mrs. Dalvane.

"Now, we'll see in two minutes," remarked the jovial little doctor, as he prepared to dress the wound.

Although he had been roused from a sound sleep in the middle of the night, he was in the very best of humours—in fact, he always was

The people in that district, when they wished to convey to a hearer's mind the agreeable qualities of a person, would say: "He is as pleasant as Doctor Gale," and that was recommendation sufficient for the most vain.

In a short time the young man's wounds were scientifically and neatly dressed.

"We have one spare room at the opposite side of the passage," said Mrs. Dalvane, "and perhaps you had better remove him there."

"Yes, yes, that will do; sleep will do him good—he will be as bright as a cricket in the morning," said the cheerful doctor; and by the help of honest Josh the wounded man was removed to the designated room, and placed in a nice, comfortable bed.

"He'll sleep, no fear of him—you need give yourself no uneasiness," remarked the doctor, as he took his leave.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Simpkins—will you accept this couch? I am sorry to say that we have not another bed."

"Mother, I will lie upon the couch, and Josh shall have my bed."

Mr. Simpkins had been regarding Walter very anxiously for a few moments, in fact, tenderly. He started at the sound of his own voice, and then the easy, querulous expression returned to his face, and he said:

"Now, Mr. Dalvane, you are very kind, but I want you to understand that when Josh—made me—take a youth's bed away from him, after knocking him up in the middle of the night, that the youth is very much mistaken. I'm going to stay here, on this thing—sofer, couch, or whatever it is—I'll keep guard over the premises."

"Since you are so earnest, Josh, I will do as you say."

After bidding the *soi-disant* pedlar "good night," Mr. and Mrs. Dalvane re-sought their couch, from which they had been so unexpected and summarily aroused.

Josh lay down upon the couch, and for some moments mumbled indistinctly to himself; then he turned over with the expression, "All's well that ends well," and went to sleep.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

"So, Charles, you think my father will be able to sit up to day?" queried Florence.

"Yes," he replied, gazing fondly upon the luminous eyes that were raised to his. "I think he will, and how thankful we ought to be."

"True. Thankful to Him who rules above, and grateful to you for the inestimable services you have so willingly and untriflingly rendered."

"Dear Floss, would any service be too arduous, or perilous, if you were interested? I am afraid you over-rate my poor acts. I was the humble instrument only of the great power that wielded my hand and brain."

They were standing in the drawing-room, gazing down upon the street. As the beautiful girl listened to these words, spoken in her musical voice so full of tenderness, a bright flush swept over her cheek, and raising her eyes, while the flush deepened as she met his ardent gaze, she said:

"I should be most happy, Charles, if it were not for one thought."

"And I know too well what that is; it is—Clarence."

"Yes, alas yes; where can he be, and poor mamma although so glad at the turn papa's illness has taken, is yet dreadfully worried about my brother. If we could only hear from him I should feel so relieved. You do not think he is—"

"No, no, Floss, I cannot imagine such a calamity. I have not the slightest idea, but that he will be returned to us alive. I cannot tell what causes me to think so, but that is my impression, and a strong one it is."

"Oh, I hope you are right," she earnestly rejoined, the look of pain upon her features giving way to one of hope.

For a short time Florence remained silent, gazing blankly out upon the street, and conjecturing where her brother was.

"Oh," she thought, "what happiness if Clarence were only here; what will he think when he knows that I love Charles?"—the question flashed across her mind and marred the anticipation—"Will he ever know it?"

She involuntarily shuddered, and one little tear-drop was forced through the silken fringe of her eye.

Not an instant did Charles Rowe's eyes leave her face. How proud he felt of her goodness and matchless beauty. What bliss was his when he thought:

"She loves me."

No words had passed between them, yet each understood the other; 'twas the magical, mythical influence that electrifies two congenial souls, and by

its subtle power attracts them, with no perceptible effort, but with irresistible force.

As he saw that one pearly drop, glistening upon her cheek, he caught her hand in his hasty though tender and anxious manner, and said:

"Dear Floss, I cannot chide you for your sadness. If I could only endure it for you—it hurts me to see your sweet face clouded."

"You are so kind," she returned, "you have endured everything that you could to save me trouble; will you never be satisfied? Must you be doing something all the time?" smiling through her tears.

"Ah, your cheerfulness is forced. Dry your tears. Your mother approaches."

Mrs. Ormsby advanced slowly into the room. She looked much careworn, and a sad expression rested upon her features, which told of sleepless nights and mental agitation. In truth, she had suffered greatly. Upon a person of her constitution, who had never exercised any self-control, sorrow has a more perceptible and debilitating effect, than on one who has been buffeted about by the waves of the sea of life, and has come to look upon grief as the natural, inevitable lot of man; has learned to regard it philosophically, think as little as possible, and act oftener with better effect and more accuracy.

After a few words relative to her husband and son, she threw herself into a chair, and the tears burst forth, caused by thoughts and conjectures with regard to Clarence.

Neither spoke. They could not cheer the pining mother, and words in such cases seem hollow. Breakfast was partaken of in silence; then the doctor looked in upon his patient for a moment, and departed.

Ever since Mr. Ormsby had been in such a condition that he could leave him, Mr. Rowe had gone down every morning to his counting-house, and transacted what few matters his patient would have done had he been there. To Mr. Ormsby, who of course felt much anxiety about his business, this was a great help, and served to quiet his mind. At the same time, it raised Rowe in his estimation, for he could not but admire the tact, skill, and patience, with which the young man met and surmounted every obstacle. He had already endeared himself to the banker as above hinted, and the two now acted towards each other more as father and son, than as acquaintances, or physician and patient.

But still, with all this care and attention, the banker was troubled. He knew now that while ill he was delicious, and it had been a harassing question, provocative almost of torture to him, whether or not he had repeated the story of the scenes in the office, and if Charles Rowe knew it.

This grew upon him, and he had nurtured the delusion until it became a fixed idea. While alone his meditation ran thus:

"If I had said something which did not amount to anything, he would tell me of it. *Per contra*, I have said too much, and he, with that delicacy which characterises him, refrains from speaking of it, lest he should jar my nerves."

Having come to this conclusion, which he persistently and invariably did, he would remain quiet a short time. Then the thoughts of that afternoon would again cross his mind, and associate themselves with Clarence.

This was ever a fruitful theme, and always served to make him nervous and unwell.

"They tell me Clarence is safe," he would soliloquise; "that he is away. Surely if he knew I were ill he would return. When he is spoken of it is with sadness; poor, dear little Floss looks downcast, my wife seems oppressed, and Mr. Rowe looks by no means cheerful, yet he tries very hard to make me think so. There is something behind all this, something concealed—ah, what can it be? I do not believe that Clarence came home on that terrible afternoon; yet I cannot doubt my own child. She tells me Clarence is safe, but while the words are upon her lips, the tear drops glisten in her eye. And when I ask her the cause she laughs, a meaningless, unnatural laugh. I must know the truth."

On the particular morning of which I write, these thoughts and suppositions had taken hold with more than ordinary force upon Mr. Ormsby's mind, and he determined that when Mr. Rowe should return he would interrogate him, and elicit, if possible, that which he so much desired to know.

Ere long Mr. Rowe returned, not, however, till some time after Mr. Ormsby had expected him.

"Well, Mr. Ormsby, everything is correct at the bank, I believe. Old Stephen is very careful and attentive, and leaves me but little to do," said the young physician as he entered.

"You are very kind; I hardly know what I should have done if you—"

"If you please, Mr. Ormsby," interrupted Rowe, with a deprecatory wave of his hand, "I am flattered all the time; your wife and daughter praise me incessantly; I know that I cannot merit it all."



"They tell the truth," replied the banker. "But I wish to talk to you, not about business, for I have not the least doubt but that is all right."

"Very well, sir, but you must not talk much, we have to guard against a relapse."

"I know, I know," mused the banker, hesitating to commence.

At that moment a knock was heard at the door.

"Excuse me a moment," remarked the young man, as he arose and passed out into the hall.

Simon stood there, smiling in his pleasantest manner. In his hand he held a note, which he passed to the young man.

Rowe smiled, and then replied:

"It tells us Clarence is safe!"

Rowe hurriedly descended the stairs. In the sitting-room he found Florence.

He took a seat beside her, and said:

"Now, Floss, will you try and look as you did the first evening I saw you? If you will, I will tell you something."

"I ought to look happy," she said, glancing at his manly face, and then blushing at her temerity; "but what is it? I dare not ask if it is of—"

"Yes, yes, darling!" burst out Rowe, enthusiastically. "It is of Clarence."

Florence gazed upon him as if in a dream, her face beaming with happiness. First at the words that escaped his lips, which sank into her heart and were treasured there, then at the intelligence so welcome from her brother. For a moment they sat silently regarding each other. She, with her expressive face and luminous eye aglow with the reflex of the emotions that held sway within; he, with the most tender glances of soul-felt love emitting from his dark eyes, expressing the words that he forced back from his lips.

They were in a peculiar position, these two lovers. He, from various reasons, refraining to speak of his love, knowing words could not add to the passion that permeated his whole being. And she, so timid, so modest, and just entering upon a new world, had not courage enough to frame her lips to the words that rested in her heart, and occupied her mind.

He respected her feelings, was happy in his love, though, as yet unexpressed in words, and was contented with the sweet knowledge, and regarded any declaration as superfluous at present.

In a moment Florence had broken the spell that held her speechless, and moving a little, she said:

"What information have you with regard to Clarence?"

"A letter," he answered. "It is peculiar, but nevertheless, I think it reliable; here it is," and he placed the epistle in her hand.

"There is no date of time or place, and the only signature is, *Verité sans peur*, which, being translated, is 'Truth without fear.' Really, it is a curious document. It seems doubtful; but, no—here is Clarence's handwriting, conveying these words, 'Do not be anxious, dear ones; I am safe, and well taken care of.' That means that he is ill, does it not?" her expression changing as she asked the question.

"It does, I suppose," returned Rowe; "but, my little Floss, that even is a great relief from the terrible suspense which it has been our lot to live under for some time past."

"Yes, and doubly welcome it is."

"Now I must return to your father," remarked Rowe, arising. "I am very glad that I can assure him with truth now, that we have heard from Clarence, for it has hurt my conscience thus to deceive him, when we had not the remotest idea of where he was. But it was done for the best; I fear that if he had had that to worry him, he would have died."

"Shall I give the note to my mother to read?" asked Florence.

"No, I rather think not; the peculiarity of it will set her thinking, and she will imagine him in all kinds of danger. You may tell her that I received the letter, and give the substance of its contents, omitting the signature. Do you not think that the better way?"

"I do."

As she spoke, she tendered him the letter.

He placed it in his pocket, and they ascended the stairs. Rowe going to his patient's room, and Florence proceeding to that of her mother.

"Well, sir, now if you do not feel too weary to converse, I will listen to you," remarked Rowe, as he took a seat.

"I desired to ask you if I have been delirious during my illness."

"You have; not to any great extent, however."

"What did I talk about?" asked the banker, trying to control his features.

"Oh, you raved about ridiculous and improbable things, as sick persons always do."

"Connected?" continued the banker, trying very hard to appear unconcerned.

"No, much disconnected. You talked of Clarence

—cried out to him to 'stop,' and then repeated the words 'imp' and 'monkey' several times."

"Was that all?" inquired Mr. Ormsby, with an effort to appear careless.

Inwardly he was trembling with apprehension, outwardly he was calm.

"Yes, that was all. And you can find some reason for that," suggested Rowe, who saw that the banker had an object in view, and wished to make him think that he knew or thought nothing of his ravings.

Mr. Ormsby started. Then seeing that he had committed an error, he suddenly placed his hand upon his side, and complained of a sharp pain.

Rowe, with well-assumed interest, immediately inquired with regard to it, and the banker congratulated himself upon the success of his ruse.

"Did you not see a hand-organ and monkey in the street before your accident?" asked Rowe, suggestively.

"Yes, I did," he answered, taking the doctor's cue.

"That, then, explained it," continued Rowe; who wished to set the banker's mind at rest. "You were annoyed by it, it was on your mind at the time you received your wound; in your delirium it assumed hideous proportions, and took the form of an imp, that is all."

"I saw Clarence, too, on that afternoon," observed the patient, wishing to help the doctor.

"Ah, that makes it still better," returned Rowe, instantly perceiving his drift. "He too was in your mind, and you very naturally called upon him to stop the imp, who you imagined was advancing towards you."

Ormsby heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction. Apparently Rowe was ignorant of that which he had feared he was fully conversant with—excellent! He had no longer that to worry him. Then he thought of Clarence, and looking up, he said:

"Mr. Rowe, I feel that Clarence is not at home—that he is ill, or dead perhaps."

"Why, Mr. Ormsby, Clarence is away. I give you my word of honour that he is a great deal better in health than you are."

"I am satisfied now, but I had the impression, where I got it from I know not, that none of you knew aught in regard to him."

"A strange fancy. You will probably see him soon," answered Rowe, wishing effectually to eradicate any fear from his mind that he might have concerning Clarence.

"Can I sit up to-day?" asked Mr. Ormsby.

"Yes; I had intended that you should do so."

And with these words the young doctor proceeded to prepare a large and luxurious arm-chair for his reception.

A short time after the banker had arisen, his wife entered. The news Florence had given her, and the fact of her husband's convalescence, had caused her expression to brighten, and she somewhat resembled her former self.

Presently, Florence came up, and with a bright smile of joy, flew into her father's arms, thankful that the cruel hand of death had not for ever paralysed them.

After mutual congratulations, and a desultory conversation, the mother and daughter descended, fearful lest too much excitement should cause a return of his illness.

The dark cloud which had shrouded their joy was now passing away, slowly it is true, but the gleam of its silver lining could be seen upon its edges.

The day passed very pleasantly to our friends, whose hearts were in a measure brightened, and their spirits refreshed by the satisfactory turn affairs had taken. Indeed Florence opened the piano, which she had not touched since that eventful afternoon, and sang to Rowe. How different his feelings then, the first time he had seen those fairy fingers fly over the keys, or heard that sweet voice.

He was happy, yet his goal of joy was yet far off ahead.

(To be continued.)

A GRAND international exhibition of horticultural implements and also a botanical congress, will be opened at St. Petersburg in the month of May, under the patronage of the Czar.

PROFITS OF A VINEYARD.—One of the last financial operations of the late Baron James de Rothschild was the purchase of the Château Lafitte vineyard. His heirs have sold the greater part of last year's vintage at the rate of 250*l.* per cask, so that the deceased banker made a very profitable investment.

COLD ST. VALENTINE'S.—The 14th of February will long be remembered in Canada as an extraordinary day. The whole country became an immense glacier, and the eye was regaled with delicate fringes of icicles pendent from fence rails, house-tops,

and the branches of trees. The more tender varieties of fruit and ornamental trees are badly injured in every direction—literally smashed down with the weight of ice formed upon them during the night. Peach trees suffered most, many of these being entirely ruined. About six years ago there was just such another spell of weather, and, strangely enough, there was an abundant crop of fruit the following season, notwithstanding the destruction of many choice trees. A Montreal paper states the fall of snow this winter at no less than 118 inches.

## ADELICIA.

BY THE

Author of "The Beauty of Paris," "Wild Redburn," &c.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

ADELICIA saw that the young lord was strangely embarrassed, and she was somewhat surprised, too, thereat, for Sir Bertram had spoken of his friend, in his letters from Ireland, as being one of the most graceful and polished gallants of the court.

But her instinct told her at a glance that Lord Charles was amazed at finding her so beautiful, when no doubt, she thought, he expected to see a plain-featured country maiden, with some claims to be termed, by courtesy, handsome. She was pleased, of course, because Sir Bertram's noble friend paid involuntary homage to the beauty of the maiden he had, no doubt, praised in Ireland; but she had neither wish nor expectation to captivate the heart of this noble friend.

She was far too young and inexperienced in the ways of the world to be able to detect the villainous purposes hidden beneath that handsome and rather stately face, as it glowed with genuine admiration of her loveliness; and though in general the glance of Lord Charles was bold and arrogant, at that moment there was nothing to cause her to shrink from him, or to wish that Sir Bertram had not been forced to ask him to be her escort.

The young lord's embarrassment increased, so that there was an awkward pause, which Adelia ended by saying, as she let fall her heavy veil:

"But we may become better acquainted, Lord Charles, before our journey is ended, and I will thank you both for Sir Bertram and myself."

Her veil was falling over her face, when her glance for the first time met that of Jerome Carew. She upheld the veil for a moment to study the face of the surgeon. She did not gaze for more than an instant before she veiled herself quickly, thinking:

"Ah, I am sorry that he saw me. I should have remembered Master Stepmore's caution not to allow anyone to see my face, if possible, before we reach Dumfries. I do not know why, but there is something evil gleaming in that man's cold, dark eyes. I wonder who he is, and why he is here? Some follower of Lord Charles, no doubt, and yet I fear him."

These thoughts flashed through her mind in an instant, and touching her horse smartly with whip and spur, she said:

"Come, good Andrew, let us hasten on."

"What think you now, my lord?" said Carew to Lord Charles, as they were again side by side.

"I think she is heavenly in her beauty," replied Lord Charles. "With what grace and ease she manages her horse! and saw you ever a figure more charming?"

"Never, my lord; and though Sir Bertram is a comely man, it is a pity that she has fancied him."

"Oh, that is because she has had no opportunity to compare him with other and more comely men," replied the vain young lord. "But Sir Bertram may go to the dogs, for he shall never wed Adelia Louvaine, if I can prevent it. Beautiful? She is, indeed, peerless."

"So your lordship once said, and doubtless thought, of a score and more of beauties whom I might name, and among them Molina Maudstone," remarked Carew, in a laughing yet respectful tone.

"Molina Maudstone," said Lord Charles, "is a most beautiful woman, that is if she lives or has not greatly altered. Do you know, Carew, that though Adelia Louvaine is far more charming than Molina Maudstone—far more gentle and womanly—I remarked a strange resemblance between them; at least, there is something in the general outline of her features that reminded me of Molina Maudstone."

Carew made no reply to this half question of his lordship, though he thought thus:

"It is not strange that the marked family resemblance has caught his notice, for Molina Maudstone is the granddaughter of Henry VIII., while Adelia Louvaine is the great-great-granddaughter of the same monarch. They are, therefore, cousins within the sixth degree of kindred. The family resemblance in some of their features is very strong, that of the

Tudor family especially. It is in the colour and expression of their eyes that the greatest dissimilarity exists. Those of Molina Maudstone are black, bold, ambitious, almost fierce. Those of Adelia are blue, soft, gentle, and expressive of innate purity and artlessness. Yet both are superbly beautiful. Adelia Louvaine is dazzlingly fair. Molina is only moderately so, and but for the contrast between her black eyes and pure complexion, might be called dark.

"Yes, they are cousins, my lord, if I dared tell you so; but Molina is of illegitimate descent, and her mother was a woman of no moral character, and her father is—Sir Blaize Thornleigh, who is the son of King Henry VIII. and a Holland lady of anything but pure nature; while Adelia Louvaine is of legitimate descent, running back to King Henry VIII., it is true, but with no stain upon her line of ancestors, maternal or paternal, all of noble character and eminent morality—not one so base by a thousand degrees as Henry VIII., from whom both Molina and Adelia are descended."

Jerome Carew, though of no moral nature himself, was forced to admit that virtue and rectitude were the only jewels in any line of royal descent. His reflections were cut short, however, by Lord Charles, whose mind was fixed on the marked resemblance of Adelia Louvaine to one whom he supposed he had won, deceived and cast aside.

"It is remarkable," said the bewildered young lord. "I cannot account for the resemblance, Carew. Is it possible that there exists any relationship between them? As you have heard me say a thousand times, I know nothing of the origin of Molina Maudstone. I engaged Sir Blaize to ferret out her parentage; I was prompted to do so by her marked resemblance to the most flattering portraits of Queen Elizabeth in her youth—portraits which preserve the family features of the Tudor family, as well as some of those of the Plantagenet and Woodville branches."

"And what did Sir Blaize discover?" asked Carew, who laughed in his sleeve at the thought of the employment of Sir Blaize in the matter.

"He reported that he could learn nothing of Molina Maudstone's parentage, and laughingly said that perhaps she might some day claim him for her father."

"So she may, or at least he will prove to your lordship that she is his daughter?" thought Carew.

Lord Charles continued: "Now, Sir Bertram Stepmore told me, in his confidential revelations, that neither he nor his father knew aught of the parentage of that beautiful maiden before us. May it not be that some relationship of blood exists between her and Molina Maudstone?"

"It is possible, but not at all probable, my lord. But, my lord, since those who attend Mistress Adelia are the faithful servants of Master Stepmore, and will not desert her—I think your lordship said she should never wed Sir Bertram?"

"I did. I tell you, Carew, I am resolved that she shall be mine, and mine alone. I feel that I have at last found a woman whom I may love all my life; a woman whose image shuts out all desire even to gaze upon any face except her own."

"Your lordship loves her so much that if all other means fail—and I think they will, my lord—you would, to win her, wed her, make her your lawful wife," said Carew, as his dark eyes glanced askance at the flushed and excited face of the enamoured young lord.

"I believe I would, Carew," replied Lord Charles.

"You may succeed in making her throw aside her love for Sir Bertram."

"Do not mention his name, and her love for him to me!" cried Lord Charles, turning pale. "I hate him, Carew. I had a species of contempt for the base-born fellow before I saw Adelia, but now I hate him. I wish he were dead, Carew."

"It would leave a clear field for your lordship," replied Carew, drily.

"If any man were to come to me within a month and say: 'Lord Charles, Sir Bertram Stepmore is dead,' and prove to me that he was, I would give that man a thousand crowns, Carew."

"Your lordship would have to borrow then," said Carew, as drily as before, "for as I am your lordship's secretary and treasurer, there are not five hundred crowns in your purse."

"Shall I not be rich when my father dies?" ejaculated Lord Charles, angrily.

"Very true, my lord, but Duke Lewis, after being in very ill health for years, has suddenly overcome his disease, and bids fair to live many years yet. Sir Bertram Stepmore shows no signs of being short-lived, my lord, and so I do not see how anyone may speak those pleasant words to your lordship, unless after having killed Sir Bertram."

"Then let him be killed," said Lord Charles.

"I would not undertake so dangerous a task," replied Carew, "for a thousand crowns, my lord."

"See," said Lord Charles, angrily. "How much would you demand?"

"If? Why, my lord, I would ask nothing; for killing men is not my trade," replied Carew, laughing. Lord Charles reined in his horse suddenly, and at the same instant fiercely clutched Carew's bridle, thereby halting the steed of the latter.

Leaning towards the surgeon, with a very pale face and eyes of fire, the young lord said, sharply:

"Carew, you speak falsely!"

"Your lordship is pleased to say so," replied the surgeon, lowering his dark eyes to the ground, and bowing with every appearance of humility.

"Look me in the eyes, Jerome Carew," said Lord Charles, fiercely, "look me in the eyes, and dare tell me that your hand has never taken human life at the bidding of another!"

Carew flashed up his eyes instantly, and gazed into those of the speaker. His pale olive cheek grew paler too, and his gaze was very unsteady, as he said, in a husky voice:

"Your lordship's father, Duke Lewis, told you that, my lord."

"He did, and as you did the bidding of the father, why refuse to do that of the son? You know I hated this Sir Bertram Stepmore yonder in Ireland, for his half-concealed superiority over me in the field and in all warlike feats. The whole army rang with his praise, and said naught of me. It is beneath me to pick a quarrel with a tradesman's son and cross my sword with his. I love the woman he loves, and who, you say, loves him. Come, your price."

"I will consider the matter, my lord," replied Carew, gravely. "It is no light affair, Lord Charles, and your lordship has proposed it suddenly to me. I will reflect upon it. But first, my lord, the lady is not yet in your power, and it is best that we consider that. You do not intend to conduct her to Dumfries, and yet she has three of Master Stepmore's most trusty men with her; and one of them, the guide, knows the route she should take to reach Scotland."

"They must be got rid of as soon as possible. Have you no drugs with you, Carew, which you may contrive to slip into their food or drink?"

"What! poison all three, my lord?"

"No; though the life or death of such men as they, mere country bores, is nothing to me," replied Lord Charles, callously. "Contrive to throw them into a deep sleep that shall last for hours, and while they sleep we can ride away with the lady. As she knows haste is imperative, and as she relies upon my supposed friendship for her lover, she will, of course, go with me willingly."

"Let us converse as we ride, my lord, or they will be too far in advance," said Carew. "Indeed, they are already out of sight."

"We can easily overtake them," replied Lord Charles, as he released his grasp upon the bridle of the surgeon. "A bend in the road hides them at present."

They spurred on at a sharp trot, and Lord Charles continued as they rode side by side:

"Haste in getting rid of the three fellows is necessary, because Sir Bertram may be already endeavouring to overtake us. He said something of doing so to-day, as soon as he had seen Sir Otto, and baffled the feared pursuit. So there is danger that, if he has not already taken the saddle, he may do so before noon. We cannot ride as fast as he, for the lady is not able to undergo the fatigue. The guide spoke of halting for refreshment at some farmhouse not far off. Can you not contrive to leave the three there, incapable of thought and action?"

"I think I can very easily manage that, my lord," replied Carew, quietly. "I have with me enough of a certain soporific drug to put a score of men to sleep. But may I ask your lordship whither you intend to conduct the lady?"

"That is indeed a puzzling question, Carew, and I have rejected a score or more of places which came into my mind."

"Your lordship must be prudent, or you will alarm her. Is there no tenant of your lordship's father whom you may trust?"

"What! Any tenant of my father's?" exclaimed Lord Charles. "You must be mad. You know how Duke Lewis regards my love affairs. He is ever saying that I shall sometime or other be run through the heart by some indignant father or brother, or worse."

"Worse, my lord?"

"Oh, by worse he means being entrapped into a private marriage with some artful damsel. I think you may bear witness, Carew," said Lord Charles. "that there is no danger of that. But what mean you by speaking of making use of one of my father's tenants?"

"I can think of no place so secure, my lord. Sir Bertram will no sooner miss his lady-love than he will make a keen search for her. If your lordship have her concealed in the neighbourhood of Trenthamdale Castle, or in the Castle itself, as for that matter—I am sure there is room enough—Sir Bertram will never think of seeking for her there, and

if he did he could not find her. Duke Lewis would never suspect that your lordship would be so bold as to carry on a love-affair immediately under his nose, I may say. Besides, if your lordship failed to win the lady's favour by other means, you might promise to make her the future duchess and mistress of those lordly domains. Then there is the ruined east-wing of the castle in which the lady might be readily concealed. There are two or three very good rooms in it, and no one ever visits that wing of the castle. They say it is haunted."

"Very true, Carew," interrupted Lord Charles. "Duke Lewis himself says it is haunted, and I know that he has not entered it for years. But what tenant would you suggest, Carew, as most reliable?"

"What says your lordship to Margaret. She lives not far from the ruined wing—often prowls about it, they say; is believed to be a witch, and in league with the evil one, as all witches are supposed to be; is avaricious, and will do anything for gold."

"And is very fond of Doctor Jerome Carew," laughed Lord Charles. "Some have hinted that she loves you as a mother might a son, for she is ever chanting your praises."

"She is a simpleton," said Carew carelessly, though a deep flush reddened his cheek for an instant, and then fled, leaving his face very pale. "Dwarf's always have some peculiar madness, and Margaret's fondness for me is her mania. The old woman is nothing to me, except as she may serve your lordship. A line from me to her will make her devoted to you."

"As for that," remarked Lord Charles, "the old woman has ever seemed kindly disposed to me. But am I to understand that you are not to accompany me?"

"My lord, Sir Bertram must be put upon a false scent, or he may overtake you."

"That is very true. I wish the fellow were six feet under earth, or fifty fathoms under water. What scheme have you in your cunning brain, Carew? For I see one sparkling in your eyes."

"None, except to serve your lordship, and when you are Duke of Trenthamdale, I trust your lordship will reward me for all I have done and shall do for you."

"Manage to win that fair maiden for me, so that I may not be troubled by Sir Bertram, his father, or my own, and as I live, Carew, I will make you steward of the Trenthamdale estates. Remember, however, that Sir Bertram, is to break his neck or be put out of the way for ever in some manner. There is evil in his eye which told me he would not fear to stab a king upon his throne, were he to rob him of his lady-love. But now for your scheme, Carew."

"It is this, my lord. As for those three serving men, I shall see that they are speedily left behind. You and I, with Mistress Adelia, will hurry on, and when a few miles away from the farm-house change our course so as to reach the Trenthamdale neighbourhood as soon as possible. I will then retire from your lordship's presence for a time, under pretence of going back to find the servants of Master Stepmore, but rejoin you speedily with a report that you are being hotly pursued, and urge you to seek safety and refuge anywhere for a time. Of course, your lordship will hurry on with the maiden, nor pause until you introduce her secretly into the cottage of Margaret, and she will soon understand your lordship's wishes. With her aid the lady can be introduced into the east wing of the castle, and then she will be your prisoner, to woo and win as your lordship pleases."

"Admirable!" exclaimed Lord Charles. "But how about Sir Bertram?"

"In the meantime, my lord, I would bearding back to meet Sir Bertram, and with some plausible story deceive him. It might be that I would meet Sir Otto Dare, and it is necessary to deceive him also."

"Good! And lead him to believe that Sir Bertram has hidden the lady, and perhaps the fierce old adventurer may at once make an end of him. Play one against the other, as best you can, Carew. But if you wish my friendship and patronage for life, so manage it that Sir Bertram be put under the ground, for I do not wish to be annoyed by the fellow's reproaches."

"I will attend to him, my lord, and for my own sake too. For should Sir Bertram ever suspect my agency in the abduction of his betrothed, he would think no more of running me through than I would of killing a toad."

"Very true, Carew. You have more reason to fear his rage than I, for my rank protects me against the wrath of such as he."

"There is another whom we should fear also," thought Carew. "And that is the disguised earl, if, as I think, Edwin Hume be he. But if once I gain possession of the contents of the lost casket, the game is all mine, and I can laugh at knights, lords, earls, and dukes, while I make my bargain with the queen."

"Let us spur on, Carew," said Lord Charles. "for



I see they have paused, as if waiting for us to come up with them."

"Take care, my lord, that the lady shall not suspect your lordship's passion for her, or she may be put upon her guard. She may learn to love you in time, but at present she will bitterly resent even a glance of love, as meaning dishonour and treachery to Sir Bertram, whom, I can assure your lordship, she devotedly loves."

"Very true, Carew, and though my very soul yearns to tell her how I am bewitched with her beauty, I will, that she may be deceived, appear cold and distant."

Few words more were exchanged, and the two rode on at a gallop, Lord Charles thinking that he had a shrewd and most pliant tool in Jerome Carew, and the latter knowing that if he failed to gain the contents of the lost casket, all his suddenly conceived plans for the attainment of Queen Elizabeth's favour would die in his own brain, as many an airy dream had died before.

Adelcia and her three attendants had halted to await their coming, as the road forked at that spot, and unless Lord Charles were to see them ride on, there was danger that he and Carew might follow the wrong road.

Poor maiden! She fancied that the success of her escape from England and all her hopes of future happiness with Sir Bertram depended upon the generous friendship of Lord Charles Grey.

### CHAPTER XIX.

As Lord Charles and the surgeon rode up, the guide said, as he pointed along one of the roads:

"We take this road, my lord. It crosses a small and shallow stream about half-a-mile farther on, but we must not continue beyond that. The bed of the stream is rocky and hard. We shall turn to the right in the middle of the stream, and ride in the water for at least two miles, so that our pursuers, if any there are, having seen our tracks to the edge of the stream, will push straight on, supposing us still upon the road. The farmhouse, where we are to rest and procure fresh horses, is not far from the banks of the stream, where we shall leave the water. I hope our quitting the main road may not be detected in the haste of the pursuit, but if so, I am very sure that our sudden change of course from this road will not be discovered until we shall have had ample time to take rest and food."

"This is a sagacious fellow," thought Lord Charles, "and I hope Carew may be able to put him to sleep."

He bowed his consent, or rather his approval of all that the guide had said, and restraining his desire to speak to Adelcia, for the sound of her voice was as music to him, and without so much as glancing towards her, commanded the party to ride on, saying:

"Very well, my good man. Ride on, all, for as I am weary and fasting I shall be glad to see the farmhouse of which you speak."

All moved forward at a sharp trot, though their horses showed many signs of fatigue and hard riding, until they arrived at the stream of which Andrew had spoken.

Here the guide again halted the party, and said to Adelcia:

"My lady, may I ask you to give me something upon which your name is embroidered—a glove, scarf, or kerchief? I will soon show you why I desire it."

"Certainly, Andrew," replied Adelcia. "Here is my handkerchief, with my name in full upon it. Do as you please with it."

"Thanks, my lady," said the guide, as he received the handkerchief; with which he rode across the shallow stream, and over the sandy beach of the opposite shore, and then a short distance along the hard and pebbly road farther on, when he halted, threw the snow-white handkerchief upon the ground, and backed his horse into the stream again.

The soft sand of the beach received the impression of his horse's hoofs, but their front being from the water, both as he went and returned, anyone looking at the tracks would imagine that two horses had been ridden over the sand; and, as there were no other hoof-prints, would suppose that those who had crossed had continued straight on.

The white handkerchief was in plain view also, and, as the guide rejoined his companions, he said:

"Whoever finds the handkerchief will—if he can read, and those whom my mistress fears can read—say, 'Mistress Adelcia Louvaine dropped this handkerchief after she and her companion crossed the stream. She is, therefore, before us on this road.' Now, then, let us ride on, my lady, as fast as we can. The water is at no place over a foot or two in depth; so we may ride boldly, and far apart, that we may not splash each other."

"Carew," whispered Lord Charles, as the others rode on rapidly along the hard, pebbly bottom of the

stream, "be very sure to put that fellow Andrew to sleep. I think you had better give him a double dose."

"I shall take care of him, never fear, my lord," replied Carew, with a sharp glance from his dark eyes, and with an ugly smile upon his thin lips.

The two miles of which the guide had spoken were soon passed over, and he led the party from the stream, which was bordered densely with heavy foliage, towards the farmhouse where rest and food were to be obtained, and where Master Stepmore had said fresh and fleet horses could be procured.

On arriving at the farmhouse, which was occupied by a middle-aged man and his wife, who were at breakfast as the party came up, the guide made known to the proprietor their needs; and as he spoke in the name of Master Stepmore, to whom the farmer was indebted for all that he possessed, the servants of the place were soon busily engaged in serving them.

"How long are we to tarry here?" asked Lord Charles, as he assisted Adelcia to dismount.

"Your lordship should know better than I," replied Adelcia, somewhat surprised at the question.

"You, my lord, are the leader of our party."

"This man, whom you call Andrew, seems to have taken that office upon himself," said Lord Charles, haughtily. "It is true that I received written instructions from Master Stepmore, but so far this fellow has been leader, and I would like to be told how long he intends we shall remain."

"My lord," replied the guide, in a respectful tone, "I do not presume to be chief in your lordship's presence. I am acting only as a guide. It is for your lordship to decide how long we may tarry. My lady's cheek is quite pale, and as it is set down in my master's instructions that we are to ride without pause until night, and then all night again, perhaps it would be well to give my lady a repose of three or four hours."

"Very true, my good man," said Lord Charles, who had only desired to gain the full confidence of the guide by feigning to be angry in order that he might flatter Andrew by appearing to apologise to him. "I have been too hasty in finding fault with you, Andrew. You will continue to act as guide and director, for I see that you understand your business. Here, my man, take this gold piece for your services so far. When our journey ends I will fill thy hat with silver crowns."

"Thank you, my lord, but I ask no reward for serving my dear young lady. I am serving my young master, Sir Bertram, too, and I owe him a life of service, for he saved my little boy from drowning a year ago. Oh, no, my lord, I am as much obliged to you as if I took the gold; but indeed my good wife would never forgive me were I to take money for serving our dear young lady."

Lord Charles laughed lightly, though he was enraged that "a fellow who was no more than the servant of a tradesman" should reject his gold.

"Take the gold, Andrew," said Adelcia, "not as a reward, but as a token of the esteem of a nobleman who is the friend of Sir Bertram."

"As you desire it, I will, Mistress Adelcia, and will hang it about the neck of my little boy whose life Sir Bertram saved, that he may not forget the kindness of Sir Bertram's friend," said Andrew, as he received the money and placed it in his vest.

"This fellow cannot be bribed," thought Lord Charles. "He must be put to sleep; no matter if for ever."

"Well, we must remain here four hours after we shall have breakfasted," he said aloud; and at that moment the farmer's wife came forward and begged the young lady to enter the house, calling her by the name Adelcia was to be known by during her journey, though the good woman knew very well who she was.

On being led into a neat and comfortable room, Adelcia said:

"I am too fatigued to carry on a conversation with Lord Charles, so please serve my breakfast here. After that I will sleep."

Perhaps Lord Charles, who was wondering if his comeliness had not greatly impressed her, would have felt little flattered had he known that his face or anything else about him, had not remained upon her mind for a single instant longer than she was looking at him, and that even as she gazed upon him she was thinking of Sir Bertram.

Lord Charles, on being told that the lady preferred to breakfast alone, replied:

"Oh, very well. No doubt she is too fatigued to converse, for I know I am. I will play hermit myself, Carew, and you may as well breakfast with the guide and the others."

Carew, who well understood what his patron meant, withdrew, and was soon on familiar terms with the three servants, especially as they thought themselves much honoured in being favoured with

the company of one who was a surgeon and secretary to a nobleman.

Lord Charles had finished his repast, and was about to lie down upon a couch to gain a few hours repose, when Carew appeared, his dark and sinister visage as grave and impassive as it generally was.

"Well?" demanded Lord Charles, eagerly.

"It is as your lordship desires," replied Carew. "They are just lying down for a short nap, as they think."

"And how will it be, Carew?"

"They will not wake up for ten hours, my lord."

"But as orders have been given that all shall be aroused one hour before noon, they may be awakened."

"The evil one could not keep them awake five minutes at a time, until the effects of the drug they have taken shall have passed off," replied Carew.

"And how did you evade the keen eyes of the fellow called Andrew?"

"Had he suspected that I desired to season his broth, my lord, with poppy dust instead of pepper, or had he the least suspicion that your lordship is not ready and anxious to peril your life on behalf of Sir Bertram and Mistress Adelcia Louvaine, the shrewd knave would have tossed me out of window. As it was, he suspected nothing. So snatch a few hours slumber, my lord, if you are still determined to pursue the design of which your lordship spoke."

"I am more determined than ever, Carew," replied Lord Charles, as he stretched his weary limbs upon the couch; and yawning, he sank into a slumber.

Jerome Carew then left the room and glided back to the kitchen, where he found the three men sleeping heavily upon the floor, and the farmer and his wife gazing at the prostrate forms, as if in great perplexity.

"What is the matter?" demanded Carew of the farmer.

"Why, your honour," replied the man, "me and my good woman here be main sad to see the lads sleeping on the hard boards when we have good soft beds for all Master Stepmore's folk. We left 'em to look after the beds we meant to give them, and when we came back we found 'em fast asleep. We tried to rouse 'em too, but failed, sir."

"They are very weary, my good man, and will rest there as well as anywhere," said Carew. "Let them alone, my friend, for if you disturb them now they will only be the harder to arouse when the time comes for us to hurry on. You have attended to the orders as regards the horses?"

"Yes, your honour, the horses will be ready."

"Very well, my good man. I shall make a very favourable report of your zeal to Master Stepmore on my return to his house. It is now nearly nine o'clock, and we must depart before or at twelve. Wake me first. You will find me in the same room with Lord Charles."

Carew then returned to the apartment in which his patron slept, sat down near a table, leaned his cheek upon his small delicate hand, and fixed his keen black eyes upon the slumbering lord.

But though he gazed so steadily at Lord Charles, Carew was not thinking of him, for his thoughts ran thus:

"I would I knew if I have ever seen Master Richard Stepmore before last night. His eyes have been burning in my mind ever since they met mine as I stood by the bedside of Sir Blaise. There is something in the merchant's face which vexes me, and I know not why. He and I have met before—years ago, I am sure of that. But when, where, or how I cannot now recall. Years ago, I know; so let me think of things which passed years since. But how many years since? I will go far back, even to my boyhood."

He closed his eyes to shut out the present and recall the past.

But Dr. Jerome Carew was not made of steel, and so before he had thought very long sleep came upon him, and his head sank lower and lower until at last it rested on the table.

His sleep was not without very unpleasant dreams, for his thin lips often quivered and muttered as he slept, and his high narrow forehead frequently became dark and rough with frowns and scowls. His fingers, too, opened and shut spasmodically, and once or twice he groaned heavily, and muttered:

"It was a cursed deed, Duke Lewis, and you and I did it. Yours the gain, mine the slavery. But I'll be even with all. Baron Carew sounds well."

Lord Charles slept as peacefully as if no base and evil designs ran riot in his callous soul. His brain was not so active as that of his surgeon secretary, nor his muscles so hardened; so that he slept profoundly, and yet in repose his features were haughty, handsome, and impassive.

But once his delicately-moulded lips moved as he slept, and then they smiled as they muttered:

"Adelcia Louvaine!"

A mere human butterfly, he could dream only of the present, and of that but for an instant.

As the hour of noon drew near, the farmer rapped at the door. As this failed to arouse the sleepers, he opened the door and entered.

"Come, my masters," he said, in a loud yet respectful tone. "It is high time ye were awake."

The frames of the sleepers were weary, and their slumber deep, so that the honest farmer's loud voice failed to awake them.

"They be of the nobility," he muttered; "at least, he on the bed be a lord, and t'other one be a lord too, mayhap. But I must lay hands on him and shake him to wake him."

"Come, sir!" he said, laying his hand upon Carew's shoulder and shaking him.

The surgeon sprang up with a wild cry of terror or rage, and drawing a dagger, confronted the amazed farmer with a pale face quivering with passion and despair.

"Not alive! Not alive! You shall not take me alive!" almost screamed Carew, as he glared at the farmer.

"He be mad!" roared the latter, and turned to fly. But before he could leave the room Jerome Carew's hand was grasping the man's shaggy locks, and the keen point of the gleaming dagger was at his throat. "Hold!" said Carew, fiercely.

"Mercy!" roared the farmer.

"Silence, you idiot! I had a bad dream, that was all. I mean you no harm. Make no more alarm, for I am subject to such dreams."

He released the farmer, who stifled his late terror with an attempt at a laugh, and said:

"Dreams be main bad at times, I've heard say, your honour, though I never had one as I know. My good woman, now, hath dreams in abundance, and had your honour time I would tell of such quaint and marvellous—"

"But I have no time, my friend," interrupted Carew, as he advanced to the couch and gently shook the sleeping lord. "Up, my lord! We must depart."

"So soon?" exclaimed Lord Charles, yawning, and rubbing his eyes. "My faith, I do not think I have slept five minutes."

"Full three hours, my lord," replied Carew. "Make ready, my lord, while I go with this man to arouse the others."

"Oh, as for that," said the farmer, "the young lady hath been up and ready to depart for more than a quarter of an hour."

"And the three men who came with us?" demanded Carew, as he and the farmer moved towards the kitchen.

"Your honour bade me first arouse you, sir. And so we have let them sleep, and very soundly they sleep too," added the farmer, when they reached the kitchen. "Come, lads! Up with you! Be ye dead or asleep, lads? Wake, Andrew! Ben! Stephen! Hi!"

But the shouting, and even kicks of the honest farmer failed to awake the three men.

"They be just dead with sleep," said the farmer, as he paused in his fruitless efforts.

Andrew, the guide, raised his head, stared about, made an effort to rise, and then sank back into a deep slumber again.

"Yes," remarked Carew. "They are heavy with sleep, and I am very sorry, for we have no time to lose. Try again, my man."

The farmer, now aided by his wife, again endeavoured to awake the sleepers; but the drug which they had unsuspectingly swallowed three hours before bound them in insensibility.

Adelcia entered the kitchen as the farmer and his wife ceased their efforts. She was deeply veiled, and the expression of her features of course was hidden; yet there was plainly anxiety and alarm in her voice as she said:

"Can you not awake them? This is very strange. They are bright and active men, and I have never known them to be called without instantly responding."

"Poor fellows," remarked Carew, "they were over-fatigued, and need more repose. In an hour or so they will be as fresh as larks."

"But we cannot wait five minutes for them," said Lord Charles, as he made his appearance. "We have slept too long. Haste! we must be off instantly. They can follow us in an hour. The guide knows the road we are to pursue; and as they can travel much faster than we can, lady," he added, as he bowed to Adelcia, "they will overtake us before night. I tremble lest those whom Sir Bertram and Master Stepmore feared are already close upon us. I am sure I heard the sound of a trumpet just now in the direction of the spot where Andrew left the handkerchief. Perhaps Sir Otto Dare has discovered the ruse, and is rallying his troop for keener search."

"Oh, let us depart at once," exclaimed Adelcia, terrified and deceived by the words and manner of Lord Charles, who feigned great agitation and alarm.

"The horses are all ready at the gate," said the farmer. "Six excellent horses, though your lordship will need but three now."

"Let the others remain ready for Andrew and his companions when they awake," replied Lord Charles, as he hurried from the farmhouse, followed by Adelcia, Carew, and the farmer. "Excuse me, lady, for urging haste, but we are in peril of being captured, I fear."

Adelcia was too agitated to reply, for she trembled lest each instant should bring the dreaded banner of Sir Otto into view, and she was soon in the saddle again, eager for flight.

Yet she said to the farmer, as Lord Charles sprang into his saddle:

"I commend Andrew and his comrades to your kindness, my friend. Bid him follow as soon as he can."

"Pardon haste, lady," interrupted Lord Charles, and in real earnest, for at that instant a distant but distinct trumpet-note fell upon the ears of all.

"It is the trumpet of Sir Otto Dare!" exclaimed the terrified lady, as she put spur to her horse and followed Jerome Carew, who had already dashed away to act as guide.

Lord Charles, who was an excellent horseman, was at her side in a moment; and both sped at headlong pace, soon leaving the farmhouse and the only friends of Adelcia far behind.

## CHAPTER XX.

CAREW was a man of great and varied information, and withal, had no little knowledge of the roads of that part of the country. In his younger manhood he had pursued the calling of a quack and nostrum vender, and as an itinerant surgeon had made himself familiar with nearly every portion of the kingdom.

He was therefore fully competent to act as a guide for his patron, no matter whether the latter might desire to go. But as Carew knew that Lord Charles had left the affair in his hands, he selected the most direct course which would lead them most speedily to the vicinity of Trenthamdale Castle, the latter being fully two days' journey from the farmhouse.

He rode in advance of his companions for nearly two hours, all riding at full speed. The road he had selected was little travelled in that day, and he halted whenever he met anyone, as he did but twice, to say that those behind and riding so rapidly after him were runaway lovers, flying from the tyranny of cruel guardians—a statement which he knew would be believed, and enlist the sympathy of the honest boors who heard it.

And, indeed, as Lord Charles and Adelcia galloped by those to whom the surgeon had spoken, both he and his fair companion were surprised as well as confused on hearing them cry out, as they tossed their caps in the air.

"Heaven speed ye, lovers! A speedy and lucky marriage to ye, gentle lovers! Never fear that we will tell of your route!"

The pace at which they were riding prevented any conversation between Lord Charles and Adelcia, nor had they exchanged a word when the surgeon halted at a place where several roads crossed each other.

"My lord," he said, as the others came up, "you and the lady had best follow the road to the right, while I ride back to meet our pursuers and turn them aside, if, as I fear, they are close upon us. Should I not rejoin you before night, you may conclude that I am with those who pursue, and baffling them. My lord, the estates of the Duke of Trenthamdale might afford you temporary refuge and security. When you shall have ridden some ten miles farther you will recognise the locality, Lord Charles, and know the proper road to take—that is, should you deem it best to visit the Trenthamdale estates."

"And if so," asked Lord Charles, "when may we expect to arrive there?"

"Sharp riding until to-night, a short repose, and sharp riding all night again and to-morrow morning, should carry you to Trenthamdale, my lord, by to-morrow noon. Your lordship has friends there, and the lady may be concealed for a few days, or at least until I rejoin you. I will return as soon as possible, and perhaps bring Sir Bertram with me."

"Oh, I beg that you will, kind sir!" exclaimed Adelcia, whose heart beat fast as she heard the name of her lover.

"Do all you can, Carew, to bring my dear friend Sir Bertram with you," said Lord Charles. "In truth, I think it best to remain concealed at Trenthamdale for a few days, for even riding fast and uninterrupted, we could not reach Dumfries under two weeks, and I fear that Mistress Adelcia's strength is not equal to that. Should you not rejoin us by night, we will ride straight on for Trenthamdale."

"I think it is the best course to pursue, my lord," remarked Carew, as he wrote a few words with his

pencil upon a piece of paper. "Your lordship knows Dame Margaret, the dwarf, and though you are a lord, and I am but your lordship's servant, she will do as much for me as for anyone in the world. I pray you to give her this slip of paper in behalf of the young lady, who will of course desire the company, advice, and services of a faithful and honest female."

"I wronged this person," thought the deceived Adelcia as she heard these words, "I thought he had an evil heart, and now his care proves that his nature is honourable, and his kindness all that a maiden can desire?"

"I thank you most gratefully, Dr. Carew," she said aloud, and unveiling her beautiful face that her sincerity of gratitude might be read upon her lovely features. "I do need the advice and services of a female companion in whom I may confide, and I regret that I left my good-hearted and clear-headed maid behind, in the haste and suddenness of my flight. Indeed, I thank you, sir, for your kind forethought."

"No thanks, my dear young lady. I am old enough and more, to be your father, and I have fair daughters, too," replied Carew, speaking boldly and unscrupulously. "Dame Margaret you may rely upon. And now, heaven speed you both!"

With these words Jerome Carew wheeled his horse around and spurred away. But when he was far beyond their hearing he said, aloud and sneeringly:

"Aye, heaven speed you both, and Lucifer speed me! You have your little vile plot to play, my lord, and Jerome Carew has his. You wish to win the lady, and I wish to win the lost casket. You are flying from Sir Otto, Adelcia, Louvaine, and I am eager to meet him, for sure am I that the contents of the casket are in his bosom. You are going to hide your pretty bird in a cage of my making, my lord, and there I may find her for the queen, or for the duke, your father, as I may see fit hereafter."

He rode on, revolving his many evil schemes and base ambitions in his busy brain, and was soon out of sight of those he intended to betray, especially as the latter had hurried on in the opposite direction when he parted from them.

After riding several miles, Lord Charles began to recognise familiar localities, and when he and his companion halted just at dark, for food and repose, he knew very well that less than twelve hours of fast riding would carry them to the cottage of the Dwarf Margaret.

(To be continued.)

## EVERARD CARRICK.

It was the sweetest day of the lovely month of June, when the violet eyes of Eva Carrick opened upon the world. Bird, bee and blossom welcomed her, and the fragrant buds of the rose seemed as if keeping their fragrance to shower upon the little maiden; while fern and brake and chestnut clusters expanded wide to meet this gala day of the season and the little child newly born.

It was in an old stone house that the little lady was born—a house that stood by the sea, sheltered by large hills from the north wind, and lying warm and sunny to the south. There was a garden and orchard—both as fresh and green and full of treasures as the rich lands of inland counties—made so, too, by the energy and industry of their owner, a nobleman of nature's own workmanship.

Everard Carrick had married, somewhat late in life, a young girl to whom he had been guardian when the death of her parents had left her alone in the world. He had taken her home to his sister's loving care; but when Eva was seventeen, Mary Carrick's death again bereaved her of a mother, and, dreading to encounter a world of which she knew nothing, she accepted her guardian's offered love and married him.

Every day that she lived with Everard Carrick she became more sensible of the rich prize she possessed, until, at length, her love grew into idolatry. He was so good, so thoroughly unselfish; and with such a heartsome, unexpecting, generous companion, she learned to be a woman fully worthy of his love, as capable of self-sacrifice and generous deeds as himself.

These were the parents of Eva; and it was not wonderful that the acorn was sown to the core when borne by such a tree.

She was lovely as a child, growing daily in beauty until, at ten years of age, a terrible accident left large purple scars over the white neck and rosy cheek, that were never to wear out. But the precious life was spared, and the sweet features were unchanged; and more than that, the lovely temper remained unruffled. She bore the pain with a calm serenity, and did not murmur when she was told that her scars would be perpetual.

At sixteen a little sister was born. What joy, what perfect delight, filled Eva's heart at the advent



of this child. Alas! it was bought with her mother's life. A few months Marion (arrick drooped day by day, and then laid her baby in Eva's arms and died.

With all a mother's tenderness Eva received this touching gift from the hands of the dying. She forgot herself and every one else, except her father, in her love for this beautiful child. Night and day she was never separated from her for a moment, save when at evening the little one closed her eyes in slumber, lying in Eva's own bed, while the devoted sister came down stairs to cheer the grief-stricken father with tales of the baby's cunning ways.

Marion Carrick was never forgotten in any hour by her own household; but her loss was softened to them as the years went on, and her memory grew less and less sad.

Little Marion's name constantly recalled her; and, indeed, she was the image of her mother. Not so beautiful as Eva would have been had her loveliness not been marred by the cruel scars over which the soft, brown curls were trained so as partly to hide them. But the child of Eva's love was beautiful enough in her eyes and in her father's too.

Alas! not long was she to know the joy of a father's love. The household was called one night in autumn to the bedside of the beloved father and master, and ere another morning dawned, he was gone home to the wife who awaited him.

It was the first time that Eva had wholly broken down; but this was the heaviest stroke of all. When her mother died her father's strong love had upheld her. Now, save but for this poor fatherless and motherless sister, she was alone. Alone, with all the burdens of life to bear for herself and another. Heaven be thanked that it supported her under the trying load, and brought her out of all her troubles into perfect peace.

Two years passed, and then Eva grew young again. The eyes that had been so dim with tears began to brighten once more, as Marion blossomed out into her half-womanly ways. She had really grown quite companionable for Eva. Every day they walked together on the shore—Marion filling her basket with beautiful shells and mosses, and helping Eva to arrange them.

Once, Marion, in her anxiety for a superb tuft of sea moss, ventured beyond her depth and was carried by a wave. She must have been drowned but for the exertions of a stranger—a young man in a lieutenant's uniform, who had been watching the waves, for a long time, and who now threw himself into them to rescue her. Eva, almost stunned by the shock, could hardly thank him, as he brought the dripping form to her and asked where he should carry her. She pointed to him the house, and followed mechanically. Then, when he had laid the precious burden on the carpet, and summoned the housekeeper and helped her to administer restoratives, Eva came out of her abstraction. For Marion was only faint, not dead; and when Eva had wrapped her in blankets and shawls, after the woman had taken off her wet clothing, she bethought herself to ask the young man to have dry clothes also.

These were easily procured at a neighbour's house; and after an hour of some little anxiety, in which Marion slept, awaking bright and well, and the housekeeper had dried the stranger's uniform, Eva began to be her own hospitable self once more.

Mr. Carrick, from the time of his wife's death, had exempted Eva from all household management. An excellent woman had taken charge of all, and was still retained by Eva.

When all fear had subsided, Mrs. Winter summoned the party to the dining-room; and over a cup of delicious tea Philip Holland told Eva his name and residence, and how he was tempted by the beauty of this quiet spot to wander around it.

There is no need to tell by what steps their acquaintance progressed until Philip Holland laid his heart at Eva's disposal. He was going away for a long, long cruise. Would she bear him in her heart until he came back again? Eva could not deny that she loved him. It was so sweet to her to feel that she should be cared for and protected once more.

He was gone. Eva felt the desolation; but, for Marion's sake, she resumed the old life, and walked with her every day on the beach where she had first seen him. While this went on, Philip Holland and I were sailing away towards the Pacific, and he was every night telling me of "the girl" he left behind him. I knew, from what he told me, that her character was stronger, and the tone of her mind far healthier than his own. Philip was a good fellow, but unstable and changeable, almost weak. He had a spice of untrained romance about him that would lead him into doing some foolish, extravagant thing, because he thought it sentimental to act thus. He was very fond of keeping the single letter—which Eva had sent in answer to his many epistles—in his bosom,

and reading and weeping over it by moonlight. A more manly lover would have better occupied himself by planning for the future of his beloved, or by making himself more worthy of her regard.

Such a weary time we had of it at last. We were homesick and heartsick before we touched the shores again; and Philip had fretted and pined until he was sent from the ship to a hospital; and just then we were ordered home. I did hate to leave the poor fellow there—but I knew it was impossible for me to stay with him. I bade him as cheerful a farewell as I could command, and was charged with innumerable messages to Eva, for he insisted on my finding her.

"I shall tell her no dreary stories, Phil; so don't talk so hopelessly. You are not going to die, old fellow, and I shall tell Miss Carrick so. Also, remember that I shall fall in love with Marion."

I cannot say that there were not a few tears on my cheek when I turned away, for I knew what a bitter disappointment it was, and how hard it must be to see us all depart, and he lying there helpless.

I seized my first moment of liberty on our arrival to fulfil my promise. It was twilight when I walked over the beach to Eva's house—the chill twilight of autumn. I was glad to feel the warm atmosphere of a room lighted up by a bright and cheerful wood fire, and to learn, from Mrs. Winter, that the ladies would be at home directly, from their afternoon walk. She left me, and the cheerful clatter of dishes in the next room told me that she was preparing tea for them.

They came in—a small, slight, blue-eyed woman, young enough to be called a girl, and another, taller, and larger, and looking very nearly as old. The first had long brown curls hanging thickly over the side of the face and neck. This must be Eva, for Philip had told me of her scars and of her successful hiding of them. She was stirred deeply by my tidings.

"Is there hope?" she asked, quietly, but in anxious tones.

Certainly, I told her, every hope that a good constitution and careful nursing could give. And she seemed comforted and grateful for my assertion.

Both ladies insisted on my staying at their house, and I was glad to do so. I wanted to study the woman who was to be Philip Holland's wife, for I felt he would need one. I became satisfied that she would be the strongest, and I felt glad that his possible ways would be directed by a more powerful mind than his own.

I had neither mother nor sister to wait for me, and so I stayed there. Eva was not gay, of course, but she was frank and kindly; Marion was all life and cheerfulness, Mrs. Winter was kind and motherly, and her presence comforted my stay.

I had not appreciated Marion's beauty at first, but it grew upon me daily. She was more than beautiful—she was glorious. She was a deep thinker, and expressed her thoughts well. She played as I had rarely heard playing, even from artists abroad. She possessed this talent largely, although all unconscious of her powers. But I was not in love with her. Had Eva been free—but she was Philip Holland's, heart and soul. The time was long before we heard any news, and Eva began to droop under the anxiety she felt. How sweet she looked! Always with that plain gray dress and her beautiful hair curling softly over the pale cheek. I could see how thin was the delicate ear, transparent almost as glass, and the long white fingers were weak and nerveless when I touched them at meeting or parting. It was all I dared to do; yet, seeing her distress and suffering, I longed to clasp her to my heart and tell her all. But no; I would not have so wronged Philip or Philip's memory.

I took a letter from the post-office, one day, addressed to Eva. I trembled like a leaf when I took it, for it was marked "ship." It was from Philip, I knew. Only Philip could execute those flourishes. I knew them of old. I do not know what ailed me, but I really felt guilty. Had I really been speculating on the chances of his never turning up again? I could not have been so base.

On my return I overtook Eva, who was out for a walk. She stepped feebly, and I offered her my arm. She took it, and we went into the house. Not until she was seated did I dare give her the letter, lest she should faint. I gave her a glass of wine and then the letter. How that poor, frail figure shook. How the dimmed eyes lighted up, and the cheek crimsoned, and the scars burned with a bright purple, as I could see through the clustering curls. They always did so when she was under excitement. I left her instantly; but with a glad scream she called me back.

"Mr. Howard! Marion! do you hear? He is coming home, my Philip! He will be here, perhaps tomorrow—perhaps to-night. Oh, heaven, I thank thee that after all this bitter woe thou hast brought him at last!"

It was as I feared. She had gone utterly out of her own calm, placid self, and in an hour she was in bed, and talking so wildly that Mrs. Winter was alarmed, and turned Marion out of the room, charging her if Philip came not to let Eva know it that night.

In the morning she was quiet and collected. She came down to breakfast and laughed at her excitement of the evening before. She was not often nervous, she said; but then it was a great surprise, and she had not realised how small a hope she had felt of his coming at all.

"I believe I had nearly given him up, Mr. Howard," she said.

I confessed that I had thought the same myself; it was so unaccountable not hearing from him.

"Well, I am not going to look for him at present. He may be detained, you know."

A shadow, was it? Did the trees stir in the wind and throw a passing darkness into the room? No, it was Philip coming in at the low window, without a single word on his lips. Eva ran to him, lifted up her sweet face and took the kiss he bestowed, as serenely as if he were her brother. Her unwonted excitement had burned itself out entirely, leaving her exhausted and still.

We got through the day somewhat wearily. Philip was dull and abstracted. Eva sat in a sort of bewilderment, as if something impossible had come to pass. Marion seemed to have forgotten Philip almost. I felt strange and uncomfortable, because the rest did not seem usual. Altogether I was not sorry when bed-time came.

The next day Philip told me that they were to be married immediately, and asked me to stay to the wedding, to which I assented, provided Eva might wish it also. She came into the room, her cheek aglow with blushes, and preferred the same request.

It was a month after Philip's arrival. Eva had been busy with Mrs. Winter all day, hurrying preparations for the wedding seemed mysteriously delayed. I resolved to leave the house, for I had supposed I should not have been detained but a week, and I would give Philip notice of my intention that evening. The lights were not yet brought when I came silently into a side door, from my twilight walk on the beach. I heard Mrs. Winter say, was gone to bed. Eva's chamber was in the farthest part of the house from the sitting-room, so as to be near Mrs. Winter. Marion slept in a small room over the hall. All was so still that I thought they had retired for the night; but soon I heard whispering voices in the next room, and became aware that the whisperers were Philip and Marion.

He was urging her to sing some song that he liked, and soon her soft, bewitching voice was trilling out notes that might have taken the very senses of a man away. I think they did take them from Philip Holland; for it was not a moment after she had finished when I heard him speak words that, had Eva heard, would have killed her on the spot.

"I love you, Marion," he said. "I thought it was Eva that I loved—but no, it is your own glorious self. Oh, Marion, my love—my darling, speak but the word, and this marriage shall be stopped at once. I cannot live without you. Oh, heaven! why did I come here? Marion, speak—say you love me and I shall be happy."

And those false, beautiful lips gave out the words he was dying to hear, and pronounced the death-warrant of all Eva's hopes in life.

"But what can we do, Philip? We must not stay here. I could not endure to see Eva after this," she added.

"We will go away, darling. I, too, would rather die than meet her look when she knows how false I am to her. Even now, I would rather give up my own happiness than hers."

At that moment, a voice sounding from the farther corner of the room in which I sat—a voice that might have come from the tomb, so hollow, dreary, and hopeless, uttered these words:

"No, Philip Holland, do not do violence to your own feelings for my sake. I should be sorry to part two lovers like you and Marion—faithful souls who have waited long for each other."

Her voice had grown harsh and bitter enough before she ceased, and the scorn and contempt it betrayed are inexpressible by any words of mine.

The next morning we found that Philip, unable, probably, to meet Eva's eyes, had departed before daylight; but, contrary to her declaration the evening before, Marion had not accompanied him. Towards noon a note came from Philip to Eva. I was with her when she read it, and the same indescribable look of scorn passed over the sweet face, making it almost wholly changed from its habitual look of serenity.

She handed it to me. It was from Philip, offering to fulfill his engagement with her, and saying that



[THE RESCUE.]

all that had passed with Marion was a troubled dream that should never be renewed.

"And what will you do, Eva?" I asked, awaiting her answer impatiently.

"What will I do? This!" and she tore the note in bits and ground them beneath her heel.

But the last strain was too much. She fell as she was leaving the room. I bore her to her room, call Mrs. Winter as I went.

"Poor darling!" she said, as we laid her upon her bed, "they will kill her at last."

And, truly, I thought she was right in believing so.

For many weary days Eva lay almost motionless. Mrs. Winter watched her by night and I by day—both of us resisting all Philip's attempts to see her. I became angry with his persistence, as she never spoke of him, and probably the sight of him would arouse her to frenzy, or kill her instantly, in her exhausted state. Marion made no such attempt. She sat in her room all day, and I could not guess whether she and Philip ever met.

At last, when Philip came again to be admitted, I rose and led him away from the door and out upon the beach.

"For heaven's sake, Philip Holland," I said, "leave this place, where you have caused such destruction. What can you propose to do by meeting Eva? Can you think her so lost to self-respect as to receive you again after what has passed? Besides, her state is so terrible that there is every reason to fear that her life or reason must be sacrificed. Go away from this home that you have destroyed. Take Marion with you if you will—but leave Eva in peace."

He seemed stunned—stupid.

"Yes," he said, "I will go away. I know I was wrong—but she tempted me."

"Stop, Philip! Had you loved Eva as you might, an angel could not have won you away from her. It

was your own weak, passionate nature that betrayed you, not Marion. But go away, for heaven's sake."

I left him strolling on the beach and went back to the sick chamber of the poor girl. Half an hour after I saw from the window that Marion had joined him. I drew the blind close and sat down by the bedside. No sound save a long sigh had ever come from Eva's lips since she had lain there. I watched her silently—Mrs. Winter coming in often to moisten the pale lips. As I watched I thought of this good and pure life thus thrown away by the falsehood of others, and almost questioned the goodness of heaven in permitting such things. It seemed so hard to see her die for this man—for this false sister to whom she had been mother, companion, guardian, all the days of Marion's life. Now, they would go away into happiness, and Eva lying here, dying, perhaps.

Let no man question the decrees of the Creator. He knoweth best what is needed for his children; and if they willfully blind themselves to his goodness, theirs alone is the miserable fault.

Mrs. Winter relieved my forenoon watch, and I went out to walk. I avoided the way to the beach, for I had not yet recovered from the indignation I had felt while walking there with Philip in the morning; and I took my road onward to a little retreat above the cliffs—a favourite path with Eva when she was tired of the sea.

I walked on and on, meditating on the altered aspects of the household since the last time I had walked here, until I came to a circular clump of trees inclosing a little hollow. I had, many weeks before, fitted some rustic seats here, at Eva's request, on the margin of a small pond within the hollow, where the water lilies grew in profusion.

"Oh, heaven! shall I ever forget what I saw there? Close by the margin of the pond, her long hair entangled in the clustering stems of the lilies, lay

Marion—and a little farther on Philip's white face gleamed up from the blue waters, buoyed up by the same tangled stems and roots. Both were dead, I knew, for they must have gone there hours before, when I left Philip. I felt faint and dizzy with this great horror; but I managed to draw them both from the water and lay them beneath the trees, where they were shaded from the hot sun. Then I ran for help. Two stout fishermen were just bringing in their boat, and I beckoned them forward to the place. They used the rough means of recovery taught them by their lives of danger, but they shook their heads after a few efforts.

I dispatched them for some rude litter by which the drowned forms might be conveyed to the house, and watched beside them until they came back.

We lifted them tenderly, and then I walked on to apprise Mrs. Winter. I knew there was no danger of Eva knowing anything of what was coming to the house.

Mrs. Winter was terribly agitated, of course; but she knew her duty, and with the aid of a neighbour and his wife, she had done wonders in a short time.

In two hours the two misguided beings lay side by side, upon the great table in the parlour, in pure white garments, looking as if asleep. Could these pale creatures be the same that had brought sorrow to the patient angel upstairs? All traces of passion or emotion had departed from their faces. They were both beautiful in death, and I wished that Eva could see them.

While I was giving utterance to this wish, and Mrs. Winter had responded with what was uppermost in her heart, "It will kill her, poor darling!" the door opened softly. It seemed as if some pale ghost stood there, to join this company of the dead. Its white garments fluttered in the breeze, and its face wore the hue of death. I rushed to the door and received the pale burden in my arms. It was Eva, who had heard all. She had missed us, and with the strength born of a new excitement, she had crept down stairs to receive confirmation of a suspicion that she had conceived. Lying there so still and quiet, she had had dreams—presentiments, it may be—which had quickened up her languid pulses and given her strength to ascertain the truth.

Over that lifeless clay she breathed out her forgiveness of the past. Upon it she pressed agonising kisses. Then she turned away and saw them no more.

They were buried in the little hollow where they had died, beside the pond where the water lilies grew.

I knew this home must be Eva's no longer. These pale ghosts must not be near to murder sleep for her. So I placed a careful and industrious couple in charge, and, attended by the faithful friend and nurse who had done so much for her, I carried Eva away to another region. The sea voyage was a cordial to her wearied frame and spirits. Away from the scene of her suffering she began to recover; and she enjoyed the delightful surprises I planned for her. I took her to Rome, Switzerland, Germany, places she had longed to see. She was brightening every day under these influences.

I had wealth, for my uncle had died during my sea life, and had left his large fortune to me, who was his sole relative. I knew Eva was perfectly independent of anyone, as well as myself; and we spared nothing to get her well again. Mrs. Winter was our chief stay, our adviser, our constantly present friend.

But when Eva had recovered I was scarcely satisfied to let this state of things go on in this way. I wanted to find a pleasant home and surround it with luxurious comfort. And I wanted someone to share it with me. I wanted our old friend to be my house-keeper and let me and my wife come and go as we should please.

I laid this subject before Eva one evening, and her changing colour told me that she was moved by my arguments in favour of a home. And when I asked her to be my wife, she confessed to me that she loved me better than all the world beside.

Every day in our own dear home she repeats to me the same sweet story in her acts, if not with her lips. Every day I have the vanity to believe that she is contrasting my strong, protecting love with the weakness of Philip Holland's. But that is a name unspoken by us always, and so is Marion's. We live in the present and hope for the future; but we do not recall the past.

Thank heaven, we have nothing sinful to remember in connection with those two names. Thank heaven that we never treated them unkindly. Therefore it is that our home is a paradise—that we have no bitter memories to darken it—that every hour brings us peace and joy.

Heaven grant that when one of us is called away from earth the other may not linger long behind.

G. H.





[DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.]

## THE PHANTOM OF MARION.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A WEEK had flown by, and once again Lord Beauford and his family were under their own roof.

Lord Beauford felt a deep and growing solicitude with regard to his daughter. He saw only too plainly that her grief was exercising a deleterious effect upon her health, and, as he gazed upon the pale, mournful face—the reflex of the sorrow within—he asked himself the question:

"Am I to blame for this?"

For an honest and disinterested reply to this question, he could not bring himself to utter, but invariably thought—she is a woman—her nature is elastic, and, at all events, the Beauford name shall not be tarnished by a *mesalliance*. As that often carelessly used, though meaning phrase, "at all events," struck with its full force upon his mind, he shuddered, his heart gave a gasp—for he seemed to see the mild, lovely features cold in death.

To counteract the sad and painful feelings engendered by the pressure of this terrible picture before his mental vision, he would hurry away to London, purchase books, paintings, music, everything that love could suggest, or money procure; yet these baubles healed not the gaping wound in her heart, nor restored the silvery ring to her voice, the roseate hue to her cheek, or the brilliant sparkle to her eye.

Lord Beauford was a whole-souled man, a gentleman, kind and considerate as we have seen, yet he was a peer of the realm, and his title had to be weighed before his own happiness, or that of his child.

It was evening, and the family were seated in the drawing-room.

Lady Alice sat in an unnaturally erect position, her hands crossed in her lap, and her eyes pensively downcast. She was alive, yes, alive, but her heart seemed slowly deadening; for the bright star that had cast its resplendent rays over the firmament of her existence, had disappeared, leaving all dark and forbidding.

As she sat thus, her mother's glance rested upon her; a glance which seemed to partake of anger, triumph, satisfaction and solicitude—almost an anomalous combination, yet a true one, for Lady Beauford's lustrous orbs could speak as plainly, and almost as forcibly as her lips. For a moment she regarded her thus, and then said, in a tone of gentle reproach:

"My dear, do not look so doleful; come, be thyself again; 'tis childish thus to grieve."

"One heart, mother, knoweth not another's joy or sorrow; one can only prescribe consolation for itself. Those who seek to alleviate grief by shallow words, or mocking advice, only cause keener pangs to the recipient."

Lady Beauford remained silent.

"You speak words of wisdom, my child," replied her father; "yet, for the sake of those who love you, you should endeavour to be cheerful. Grief was never lessened by being nourished; you perceive the truth of that, I suppose."

"Neither, father, does opposition or constant importunities to repress the grief that consumes one's heart, tend to lessen it."

"You are quite a philosopher," he gaily rejoined, endeavouring to cheer her; "but really, Alice, this is all nonsense; come, now, sing to me."

She arose mechanically, wearily seated herself at the piano, and sang in a melancholy voice, which tended not to please her father, and rather irritated her mother, who arose and took a seat at the opposite side of the room, near the park window.

An hour passed, and hardly a word had been spoken. Lady Beauford cast aside the book which she had been vainly endeavouring to fix her attention upon, and drew nearer to the window and gazed upon the stars, while her mind was occupied by many conflicting feelings, though her face was calm and immovable.

As she peered out into the darkness, a face, white as the driven snow, was pressed against the window, while the eyes were weird and staring, and gleamed with a deathlike lustre. As Lady Beauford gazed upon the pallid, sepulchral features, a tremor shook her frame; she started to her feet, threw up her hands, and uttered a shriek of mingled terror and horror.

"What is it, Lucretia? What startled you?" exclaimed Lord Beauford.

"Oh, Arthur, a face at the window; and such a face; it was frightful!"

"Whose face? Nonsense! No one can obtain ingress to the park. You must have imagined it."

"Imagine it? No, no; let the servants be summoned, and search the grounds. I could not rest, did I think that evil countenance was about to look upon me again!" she ejaculated, clinging to her husband.

Lord Beauford gave orders to have the enclosure searched, and then, with a vague, indefinite feeling—he could not call it suspicion—returned to his wife, who had now recovered her self-possession. He

seated himself and endeavoured to regain his equanimity, for he had been somewhat irritated at what he termed his wife's childishness. In a few moments, a footman entered and informed them that the park had been thoroughly traversed, but no trace of any individual could be seen.

"Are you satisfied?" queried Lord Beauford, desisively.

"I certainly saw the face, whether the person can be found or not," she firmly asseverated, too politic to allow her husband to think it was a chimera of her imagination, for she knew, did he think so, he would next delve deeper for the subject in her mind, which, by its strength, had given birth to and developed the illusion.

For some time Lord Beauford remained silent. That recurring, dim doubt, that shadowy, mythical mistrust, that undefined, intangible suspicion that seemed unjust, and yet not unreasonable, that appeared foolish, yet he could not denounce it as such; and, at last, to quell the uprisings of his refractory thoughts, and to relieve his mind from the disagreeable quandary, he requested his wife to accompany him to the library.

Wondering what new crotchet had entered his head, she smilingly assented, and placing her arm within his, and giving expression to a few frivolous remarks, walked towards the library.

Comfortably seated upon the velvet-covered sofa, Lord Beauford hesitated, and at last, after many pre-fatory motions and grimaces, said, hesitatingly, as though the subject was not developed in his mind sufficiently to frame it into words, and as though he were treading on dangerous ground:

"Ahem—Lucretia, I desired—no, that's not it. The fact is, I don't know exactly what I want to say, but I—"

"Proceed, my dear; what can it be that causes you to hesitate?"

"Well, I have been thinking upon the cause of your agitation when Colonel Le Fontaine so suddenly entered the drawing-room of the McGreggor castle."

Ere he had half finished his remark she had divined his purpose, and her fertile mind instantly prepared a skillful and convincing defence. As he concluded, she looked up, her eyes sparkling with merriment, while a tenderly reproachful expression rested upon her features, and replied:

"Why, Arthur, all this preface to a simple question? You know the reason as well as I do. If you remember, I had just expressed a desire to see him, and he immediately entered. I should think that was enough to frighten anybody."

"Yes—yes, certainly," he returned, unsatisfied yet he knew not why, and still doubting, though he could give no reason for it.

"Why did you ask me that?" she said, bending her eyes lovingly upon him, while her face grew pensive.

"Oh, no reason, none," he answered, becoming more uneasy. "I somehow thought—no, I didn't—hem, yes, I did—"

"Thought what? Tell me all and relieve your mind, for you are the dearest, silliest man that ever lived." And she kissed him coquettishly.

"Well, now, don't feel hurt," he cautiously responded, inwardly accusing himself of a very great mistake, "I had a remote—you understand—very remote idea that you might have some slight—you understand—very slight—motive—"

"Oh, Arthur, motive—what motive could I have?" she tremulously interrupted, her face growing melancholy.

He saw the signs of an approaching storm, and decided to discontinue the colloquy, but he had arrived at a point where that was impossible, and, repressing his aggravation, reluctantly continued:

"I really don't know; I am very foolish to speak of it; I wish I had not."

She perceived her advantage, and with a woman's tact determined to pursue it. Accordingly, she hesitated a moment, while her face grew sad, and then rejoined:

"So you wish you had not said anything; that looks as though you desired to say something more, but refrain lest you should say too much. Oh, Arthur!"

That was exactly Lord Beauford's position, but he feared a scene, and consequently said:

"Not so, my dear; far from it; I assure you that you are—yes, that you are greatly mistaken."

"Your manner is hurried, and you hesitate, as persons do when they want to overcome a difficulty. Arthur, I know not the meaning of this—I—I—believe you suspect me of something,"—the tears coming into her eyes as she spoke.

"No—no—my dear," he spasmodically answered, becoming very restless, and dreading a weeping scene, "I only desired to find out—confound it, that's not it!"

"Yes, it is, too!" she petulantly sobbed. "And you thought ill of me—I would not have believed it—Oh, de—dear!"

The earl drew a long respiration, and earnestly wished he had remained silent. Bending over her, he tried to quiet her, and said:

"Don't, Lucretia, don't weep; I really did not mean anything."

"There, I knew it—I knew it!" she moaned, catching at the slightest word; "if you had not meant anything, you would not say so—and you—thought I did wrong—oh, Arthur!"

Lord Beauford was now thoroughly provoked with himself for giving expression to his thoughts, and wiping the perspiration from his brow, he choked down his resentment, and mildly continued:

"There, there, dear! I don't weep! I was very silly. I won't do so again."

"That means you'll think all the more of it. Oh, my husband! my husband! how could you—when I tried to love you so, and be kind—and now, you suspect me! I wish—I wish I was dead!"

"Oh heaven!" gasped the earl, "now I'm in a fine domestic dispute!" and once more cleansing his brow from the gathering drops, he said soothingly:

"I know you have, my dear, and you have made me very happy; you know I would not hurt your feelings."

"And do you love me?" she asked in piteous, pleading accents.

"You know I do, Lucretia; how can you ask that question? Come, my love, dry your tears."

"If I thought you considered me deceitful, I should die! I know I should!"

"Will the woman never cease? I'll never open my heart again," groaned the persecuted husband; then taking her hand, he remarked: "No, no, my wife, I never dreamt of such a thing—indeed I did not."

"Well, you won't do so any more, will you?" she said, in tones of adro reproach.

"No, no, he hastily ejaculated, hoping his martyrdom was almost over. "In fact, I don't know what I did say it for."

"That's what men always say when a woman begins to cry," she responded, resolved to teach him a lesson that he should remember.

Lord Beauford groaned in spirit, and, with a faint hope that he should not make another blunder, so that she could retort, said:

"Come, come, Lucretia; I think I have sufficiently atoned. Do you not believe my words?"

"Yes, I do; but you hurt me with your cruel words. Now kiss me, and be good."

Having tendered the requested carous, and uttered a few words of condolence, affection and contrition, he essayed to return to the drawing-room.

"Wait a moment," she said.

"Well, my dear?" he tremblingly queried, fearing a return to the annoying subject.

"Don't you believe I saw a face at the window?"

"Oh, certainly, my love. Of course I do," he rejoined, willing to make any admission to avert another tempest.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

PERFECTLY satisfied, and not doubting in the least but that the noble Earl of Marion would remember his late experience for some time to come, Lady Beauford dried her tears, and followed her lord to the drawing-room.

Lady Alice was not present; and her mother, noticing it, remarked:

"I will go up and see Alice; I fear she is not well."

Her husband nodded, and, seating himself, tried to dispel the ill-temper which the rigid cross-examination he had been subjected to had caused, although he would not have had his wife imagine that he was not in the best of humours, for it might have called forth more tears; and if there were anything that exasperated him, it was woman's weeping.

Lady Beauford ascended to Alice's room, lingered there a few moments, and then a desire seized upon her to mount two flights higher, and walk upon the battlements. As it was a warm, beautiful evening, and she was well aware that her husband could not object to a few moments of solitude at that particular time, she yielded to her whim, and proceeded to carry it into execution.

She had traversed the battlements a few times, meanwhile deeply meditating; when, passing, she cast her eye towards the haunted castle.

"Ha, ha!" she scornfully muttered. "They say—the poor, ignorant folks—who live in the borough—that a ghost has persecuted those battlements every alternate year, for the last twenty years; that when it comes twice in the same year, one person will die; that when it shall appear thrice, two persons will die at nearly the same moment. I should like to behold that ghost once, as yet I have never seen it;" and thus closing her soliloquy, she continued her walk.

When she returned she again stopped, and once more directed her eyes towards Rutherford Castle. As she gazed, a white, shadowy figure arose and glided majestically along, and, as it approached the tower, paused. For a moment it remained motionless, looking weird and unearthly in the dim rays of the moon.

Excited, and not a little mortified, as she reflected upon her contemptuous laugh of a moment before, Lady Beauford stood silent, with her eyes riveted upon the apparition.

An instant a light appeared, grew into a flame, and shed a green lustre over the surrounding spot that made the figure appear positively terrible, and caused an involuntary shudder to circulate through Lady Beauford's frame. Calling forth her courage she again fixed her gaze upon the charmed—or, as the superstitious would term it, accursed—spot. The light seemed to move without any power or resting-place but the air, and when directly opposite the phantom's shoulder, it remained stationary, plainly revealing the features.

Lady Beauford trembled. Slowly the long and snowy arm was raised and pointed towards her, the flame grew brighter, the arm longer and whiter, the features more ghastly, the eyes more glaring, and with a wild cry of terror, Lady Beauford recoiled, pressed her hands to her brows, and exclaimed, in a choked voice of affright:

"Great heavens! 'Tis the face at the window! 'Tis Lady Anne Rutherford!" and ere the last word escaped her lips, her brain reeled, and she fell heavily to the roof.

At that moment old Ezra stepped upon the battlements, and hearing a fall rushed towards the tower, gazed with astonishment at the prostrate form of his mistress, and then carefully raising her, placed her in a rustic chair and shouted loudly for help.

Under the quieting and aromatic odour of a fine cigar Lord Beauford had arrived at an enviable state of comfort and content, when his enjoyment was suddenly interrupted by hearing the voice of the old retainer ringing in startling tones through and about the castle. Wondering what new event had occurred to again discompose him, the earl hurriedly left the apartment, and quickly ascended to the battlements, where he was again amazed at beholding the inanimate form of his wife. He questioned Ezra as to the cause, but could obtain no information, and with his former doubts again strangely excited, proceeded with his wife to her chamber, and placed her

upon the bed, where, after a short time, she returned to consciousness. The question as to the cause of her syncope trembled upon his lips, but recollecting his former experience, he wisely refrained, and, after seeing that all her wants were supplied, he returned to the drawing-room, and once more endeavoured to recover his equanimity.

As Lady Beauford again became in full possession of her faculties, the scenes she had witnessed recurred to her mind with startling force. They suggested terrible thoughts, that served to keep her in a state of tormenting agitation, and at last, after some hours of nervous meditation, her mind was rendered a chaos, out of which she was enabled to retain only one idea, and that was:

"I will find out whether that ghost was dead or alive!"

#### CHAPTER XIX.

THE determination which Lady Beauford announced at the close of the last chapter was far easier to resolve upon than to put into execution. She had seen an apparition, and thought she saw a face at the window. If one was a creature of her disordered imagination, it was but reasonable to suppose that the other proceeded from the same source; and yet she disliked to put this construction upon it, for it reflected upon herself; it indirectly accused her of weakness, and she knew it was an unjust imputation upon her character; for weaknesses of mind or purpose, as the reader has on this doubtless perceived, was not among Lady Beauford's failings.

After deliberation, feverish, excited deliberation, she came to the conclusion that neither of the phantoms were optical illusions, or creatures of an overwrought mind, but that she had actually seen both. Having arrived at this decision, she next pondered upon what course she should pursue in ascertaining whether they were mortal or spirits—she scoffed at the latter word, but still dared not think that they were mortals, for the very reflection, without the fact, would be sufficient to lash her mind into torture, and render her incapable of thought, much less of action.

After a few moments more of contemplation, Lady Beauford determined to proceed to London, and at the same time endeavoured to calm her perturbed mind, and look upon life, as she was wont to do, with rigid indifference, and stoical disregard of everything but her own desires and purposes.

Descending to the drawing-room, she informed her husband that she was going to London.

"To London, my dear?" he echoed, in surprise, "why, it's only a short time since you were there."

"I know it, my love," she kindly replied, placing her hand upon his shoulder and gazing tenderly into his face, "but I am obliged to go."

"Obliged, why?"

"Now, you inquisitive man, I thought curiosity belonged only to women," she gaily replied; "but you shall know when I return."

"Very well, Lucretia, act your own pleasure," he indifferently rejoined.

"Now, Arthur, how cold you speak, just as if I would go if you did not want me to do so," she said, regarding him with an injured look.

"I did not intend it as such," he answered; "you are very sensitive."

"I know it, Arthur," she whispered, twining her arms about his neck, and placing her face close to his; "but it's because I love you now. I was not so once."

He looked up with a kind, grateful smile, and returned her caress.

"Why, even now the carriage is ready," she exclaimed, "good-bye, Arthur," and again she kissed him, and assumed her outside attire, which a servant had brought her a moment before.

Smiling pleasantly, she kissed her daughter, left the room, entered her carriage, and was carried on towards the station.

While flying over the country, impelled by the mighty power of steam, Lady Beauford had ample time for reflection; the motion of the train was in unison with her thoughts—quick, agitated and fiery, and her features testified to the battle that was progressing within, for over and anon those dark, powerful eyes sent forth flashes of meaning light, while the firmly compressed lips seemed about to utter with vehement force and terrible resolution the words, "I will!"

Arriving in London, she entered a carriage, and ordered the coachman to proceed to Lincoln's Inn Fields. As she was jolted over the pavement her anger seemed to increase, and by the time she had reached her destination she was in a fierce passion.

Alighting a few steps from Mr. Shrowder's office, she dropped her veil, and walked with hasty steps towards the sanctum of the affable and crafty attorney.

Quickly ascending the stairs, she entered the room



with a firm, angry gait, and throwing herself into a chair and removing her veil, cast a glance of contempt at the worthy lawyer, who was seated in his arm-chair, and oblivious to all the world, for he was sound asleep and snoring loudly.

For a moment she regarded him wrathfully, then, she lifted her parasol and touched him.

"Eh—hallo—what is't?" ejaculated the unworthy follower of Hale and Bacon, starting up and rubbing his eyes.

"You are a fine man, you are," quoth Lady Beauford, sneeringly, "no wonder your clients suffer; you are always asleep."

"Ah, my lady, you here?" continued Mr. Shrewder, regaining his senses and affability at the same time. "I am very sorry that you had to condescend to awake a mere lawyer; very mortifying indeed. I beg your ladyship's pardon."

"I wish none of your simpering, deceiving urbanity," she sharply retorted. "I came here on business."

"Certainly, business—that's the word—business," rejoined the attorney, rubbing his hands and smiling broadly; "well, what is't?"

"I have an account to settle with you."

"Ah, yes," assented Mr. Shrewder, stroking his whiskers and thinking of money, "most happy to accommodate you, most happy, I can assure you."

"You idiot!" ejaculated Lady Beauford, with rising anger, "you do not expect money after the series of maddening blunders you have made?"

"Blunders, Lady Beauford—blunders—what do you mean?" queried Mr. Shrewder, ceasing to caress his whiskers and gazing at her in astonishment.

"What do I mean?" she almost gasped. "Don't you know, or have you lost all the brains you ever had? Oh, you are so provoking. Why, none of your schemes have succeeded, not one—do you hear?" she concluded, drawing nearer to him, while her hot breath wafted across his face.

Mr. Shrewder moved his chair a few inches from her; her turbulent manner made him uneasy; then coughing, he ran his hand through his long, curly hair, and replied:

"You are mistaken, my lady; my plans have been faithfully executed."

"They have not!" she articulated, between her clenched teeth. "Dare you attempt to deceive me? I know that your words are false."

"Now, my lady," responded Mr. Shrewder, with sarcastic obsequiousness, shaking his long, brown curls very humbly, and leering out from the corners of his large grey eyes, "although I appreciate most deeply your elegant phrases, I would not have you lavish them so bountifully upon me."

"Silence, sir! I desire none of your cringing complaisance, or wretched attempts at irony. I know what I say when I tell you that, just before I left Scotland, I saw the colonel at my side."

"You must be mistaken, my lady; the cottage was blown to the sky, and all in it perished."

"I know that, but I saw him three days after."

"At all events," continued the attorney, implacably, "the two who were in it are no more."

"And who are they?" she hurriedly and fiercely demanded. "What do I care for them? It is he who is the curse of my life! Oh, if I were only a man, these failures, these abominable defeats, should not be!"

"Keep cool," mused the attorney, still unmoved. "If I were to tell you who one was, you might possibly care."

"And who is it? speak!"

He glanced cautiously around, and then bending forward, whispered:

"Margery Hinkley!"

"She—she alive?" gasped Lady Beauford, in tremulous accents. "Oh, what new torture am I to endure? It seems as if all the imps of Hades were plotting against me! But I will win—I will win!" she concluded, in half-cried accents of rage.

"Undoubtedly, my lady, undoubtedly," repeated Mr. Shrewder, soothingly; "she left this world some time ago; nothing to fear from her."

"Are you sure?" she asked, with painful earnestness.

"Very sure; nothing could be more so."

"Now about the first obstacle. I have gone thus far, and no power on earth shall stop me. If I waver now, 'tis disgrace; if I fail, 'tis death for me—and you too!"

"Don't speak of it, I beg of you," returned the attorney, with a sickly attempt at a smile. "I have a perfect horror of the word; but we won't fail."

"You know the consequences. Now listen to me, for I want to ask you a question."

"Well, well?" quoth Mr. Shrewder, with a show of trepidation.

Placing her face close to his, she said in low, hard, ringing accents:

"Does Lady Anne Rutherford live?"

The attorney started, pressed his hands to his heart, and tremulously exclaimed:

"My lady, I—I really wish you wouldn't startle me so! Oh, what a question! Live? I should hope not. Why, of course not; she died, and was buried years ago!"

"But I saw a figure upon the battlements of Rutherford Castle last night that bore her features. A short time before, as I gazed into the park, a white, death-like face was pressed against the pane, and the features were also hers."

"Nonsense," replied Mr. Shrewder, with a sigh of relief. "If Lady Beauford has come to believe in ghosts, I'll turn minister, or temperance lecturer."

"I saw it, dead or alive!" she resolutely affirmed.

"Don't be silly—"

"How dare you speak thus to me?" exclaimed Lady Beauford, indignantly. "Remember who you are addressing."

He laughed a mocking, rattling laugh, and then observed:

"You still desire to have this prosecuted?"

"Coward! Ingrate! Of course I do! Why will you drive me wild by such questions? Maddened at first by many things, I ruthlessly put my neck into this yoke; now it must go on, though the heavens fall! They call me woman. I am dead to every human feeling. Cajoled, deceived, and trifled with, have I been, and now it is my turn. Mark me, Richard Shrewder, stop at nothing, cavil at nothing; to hesitate is to fail, to fail is to die!"

And, overcome by her excitement, she fell into her chair, while her form was shaking from violent internal emotion.

"An awful woman—great will-power—stern purpose," muttered Mr. Richard Shrewder to himself, "as he screwed up his left eye, ran a piece of paper into his ear, and continued to gaze upon her, half in fear, half in admiration."

For some moments Lady Beauford was silent. She appeared to be struggling with the memories and reflections that rushed in torrents through her mind, and caused her heart to vibrate convulsively. At last the mental storm had subsided, and again she was Lady Beauford, cold, hard, stoical, implacable, and bitterly sarcastic.

Mr. Shrewder saw that she had recovered her equanimity, and, resuming his polite manner, queried:

"Do you know where the colonel is?"

"In Paris, I think. I believe he intends to rejoin his regiment."

"What regiment?"

"The Imperial Chasseurs."

The attorney took notes of her statements, and then after stroking his whiskers, pushing his hands through his hair, and evincing many other tokens of indecision, he moved back in his chair, and began slowly and hesitatingly:

"Ahem! My lady, I wish—no—not that—I—"

"Speak out!" exclaimed Lady Beauford, angrily.

"I hate men that act like whipped school-boys. Speak!"

"Well," he rejoined, half assured, yet rather carefully, "I suppose that you are aware that the expenses of this suit have been rather heavy, and I am pressed for money."

"When you do anything you shall have your money, and not one instant before!"

"But, my lady—"

"No buts about it, sir; I mean what I say!" said she, decidedly.

"But you shall!" exclaimed Mr. Shrewder, his love for money overcoming his policy.

"Shall, sir?" ejaculated Lady Beauford, drawing her fine form proudly up, and glaring at the lawyer with haughty contempt. "Remember I can crush you as easily as I can speak."

"You are in my power, too!" he whispered, a gleam of triumph lighting up his eye.

"Bah!" she scornfully answered. "What would your word weigh against mine, supported by one of the most powerful peers of the realm? Richard Shrewder, you talk foolishly!"

He at once perceived the truth of her words, and wisely refrained from continuing the altercation. In a moment he remarked in subdued tones, and using legal phraseology, for she had drawn near the door:

"I suppose when I satisfy you of the settlement of the suit, and place the deeds in your hands, that you will pay me what I ask."

"Yes, and not until then!" and, with a stately inclination of her head, Lady Beauford passed out.

She had been gone but a few minutes, when the individual known to my readers as Jasper Kingsbury, alias Sir Edward Delmar, entered the office in a hurried manner. Hastily seating himself and wiping the perspiration from his brow, he said:

"I've got bad news."

"What is't?" sharply demanded the attorney.

"Margery is here in London, alive and well!"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Mr. Shrewder, using his favourite expression. "How in the name of all that's good and bad did she escape?"

"That's the mystery. The hut was reduced to dust. Everything seems to work against us!"

"You must do better, Jasper; you have done nothing but fail—fail—fail, and I am getting tired of it," said he, indignantly.

"What more can I do?" queried his companion, in a coarse tone of reproach. "I take every precaution, yet it goes wrong."

"It must not, and shall not much longer. If it does we shall all be lost," answered Mr. Shrewder, decidedly.

"That's a pleasant prospect," mused Jasper; "but there is one thing certain—I must have some money."

"I knew it," growled the attorney; "but you will be obliged to wait, the same as I am. When the work is actually done, then you can have your money, not before."

"Then it shall be accomplished very quickly," returned Jasper. "But," and he drew closer to the other, "I believe there is a powerful and vigilant agency working against us."

"What!" shouted Mr. Shrewder, in tones of alarm, while his eyes gleamed. "What reason have you for thinking so?"

"Our defeats, when we seem to be upon the verge of victory."

"If that be all, you need have no fears," replied the attorney, with a sigh of relief. "You have only to look sharper and act more severely. Now you must leave me. I have an appointment, and do not wish you to be seen. Remember, I tell you, as I was told not an hour ago, to fail is to die!"

"I shall recollect," answered Jasper, while an evil expression flitted over his features. "I have a private interest in this case, and—by heaven, it shall be consummated!"

And with these words he disappeared.

After leaving Mr. Shrewder's office, Lady Beauford ordered a carriage and called upon Lord Lyndon, at whose mansion she remained until the afternoon, when she took the five o'clock train for Marion.

She reached the castle just as her husband and daughter were taking tea. As she entered, Lord Beauford looked up with a glad smile, and said:

"Ah, my dear, you have come. I began to think that you would not arrive until to-morrow."

"You know I do not like to stay away from you as I did once," she answered, in a tender voice.

"And it is happiness for me to know it," he replied, thinking how different his life had been for the last two months.

"Now do you want to know what I went to London for?" she asked, with a peculiar smile.

"Well, I am a little curious, though I know not why."

Opening her reticule, she drew therefrom a book elegantly bound in crimson and gold, and passed it to her husband.

"Why, my love, what is this?" he asked, in pleased surprise, as he gazed at his name stamped in gold letters upon the cover.

"Read the title-page," she rejoined, while her eyes were downcast, and she narrowly watched his expression.

With peculiar sensations he turned to the page and read:

"To my beloved husband, the noble Earl of Marion, this book is dedicated by his wife, the authoress."

For a moment Lord Beauford seemed bewildered; then arising, he drew her to his breast, and murmured:

"Dear, dear Lucretia, now I can be proud of you, as well as love you! I never dreamed you were thus gifted."

She dashed a tear from her eye, and said tenderly:

"If I have added one drop to your cup of happiness, 'tis all I ask!"

For a moment he gazed upon her with increasing love, and felt that he had bitterly wronged her by the doubts he had nourished; then, turning to his daughter, he said:

"Alice, you knew not that your mother was an authoress. See, here is her first book, and dedicated to me."

With surprise and gladness intermingled, Lady Alice advanced, and received the novel from her father's hand.

"Why, dear mother, I am so gratified; and the title is the 'Earl's Bride.'"

"Yes," assented Lady Beauford, "I wrote that during our unhappy life, but the book does not describe it; on the contrary, it pictures existence such as we have had for the last two months. I thought then, if I could not have it in reality, I could in romance."

Lord Beauford gazed upon his wife in silent hap-

piness. He was deeply affected; his heart had undergone a revulsion of feeling, and he now looked upon his wife with affection and pride.

"You will excuse me, mother," remarked Lady Alice, "but do you know you have changed greatly—you are more affectionate than formerly."

"Your remark needs no apology, my child," she answered, in a tone of mild self-reproach and contrition. "I have just learned my duty to my husband and child. I have caused them unhappiness enough; now I am trying to retrieve it."

"To be frank, mamma," continued Lady Alice, "I never liked you until lately."

"And I a mother, and my darling daughter make such a confession," she exclaimed, as the tears rose to her eyes. "Oh, how I have neglected my duty! Can heaven forgive me?"

And, approaching, she clasped Lady Alice to her breast, and murmured, as she pressed kiss after kiss upon the fair brow:

"You shall love me yet, my sweet one."

As Lord Beauford saw this, tears dimmed his eyes, and he turned his head away to conceal them, while his heart throbbed with new-found bliss.

A moment after, he arose; and, taking each by the hand, said:

"My wife and my child, to-day our life brightens, for I love my wife."

"Thank heaven for that!" said Lady Beauford, devoutly, as she pressed a warm kiss upon his lips. "Our home shall now be harmonious, and sweet affection shall twine itself around our hearts and purify our lives."

Lady Alice smiled through the tears which the affecting scene had called to her eyes, and, for the first time, felt that she had a mother.

The evening passed away in beatitude and domestic peace. Lord Beauford seemed years younger, and his face glowed with the ennobling feelings that actuated his heart, and he felt that he had a wife to be thankful for.

(To be continued.)

## THE PROPHECY.

BY THE

Author of "Oliver Darrel," "Michel-dever," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER X.

In the country house in which Mr. Linwood and his wife were guests, two rooms had been appropriated to their use, one of which was given up to the niece of the latter, and her nurse. In the larger one, on Christmas eve, were the husband and wife. He was lounging in a large chair, but she seemed nervous and ill at ease, and flitted from window to window, following with her eager eyes the form of a woman carrying a child in her arms, who was crossing the lawn below.

At length Linwood looked around, and in his clear musical tones asked:

"Why are you so fidgety to-day, Nell? You make me quite nervous, flitting to and fro."

His wife turned towards him and some sensations seemed to clutch at her heart and stop its pulsations as she whispered to herself:

"Ah, if he only knew! but he will all too soon, and if I cannot evade his suspicions, he will carry out his cruel threat to throw me off, and cast me down among the Pariahs of the world."

Linwood impatiently asked:

"What are you muttering to yourself, Ellinor? Are you afraid that our plan will be carried out to-day, and you will see our pet no more?"

"Our plan! Oh, Louis, you know that I would sooner have died than help you to form so wicked a scheme."

He turned in his chair, and haughtily said:

"I thought the affair was settled, and all discussion at an end. You know the alternative. If you wish to retain your position as an honourable woman, you must sacrifice the child's interest in the estate. If you loved me as a wife should, you would not hesitate to get rid of the incumbrance that shackles your power to dispose of your father's property in such a manner to secure my future interests."

"But, Louis, I may outlive you, and as long as I dote you will have unlimited control of all I possess."

"That is all you know about it. Your share of the estate has already been dipped into, and unless you can secure hers, you will be comparatively poor. My debts of honour had to be promptly paid, and I am not a lucky gamester. If you do not like it, you have only to refuse positively to abet me in it, and I shall know what steps to take. I have letters in my possession addressed to you, a married woman, by Count de Brinville, which would condemn you in the eyes of any jury, and you dare not dispute their genuineness."

His wife grew paler than before, and then blushed deeply as she said:

"When that silly young man persisted in writing such stuff to me, I showed you two of his letters myself, that you might free me from his persecutions. You took them from me, and would not allow me to destroy them, as I wished. The count withdrew his attentions, after an interview with you, which did not result in a duel. How you settled it I never knew; but I supposed, till lately, that his letters had been returned to him. Now you threaten to bring them forward in a court of justice, if I refuse to commit an act from which every impulse of my nature recoils."

"Yes, madam, and I will do it. The very fact that such letters were written to, and read by you, would condemn you in the eyes of every right-thinking person. We are not in France now, madam, but in a country in which no such freedom as you assumed when abroad is allowed to women."

In a broken voice, Mrs. Linwood said:

"I only wished to prove to you that others considered me charming, if you were indifferent. I never meant to do more than arouse your jealousy, and you know, Louis, that I also have much to complain on that score."

"You are in my power, but I am not in yours. I admire pretty women, and I amise myself with them; but men may do with impunity what would ruin one of your sex. A woman must be above reproach."

"The law of heaven is the same for both," she said, in a low tone. "If I have done wrong I have bitterly repented."

Mrs. Linwood threw herself on a sofa and buried her head in the cushions, giving way to a burst of emotion she could no longer control.

"This is folly, Ellinor. I am waiting for your decision, and I cannot remain here much longer. I have promised to practise some duets with Dora Lyle, and she will expect me to join her in a few moments."

She now lifted her white face, and said:

"Dora Lyle shall not have the opportunity to assume my place beside you; nor shall you trample my fame in the dust, with my own consent. The alternative is a terrible one, but I consent to it. The child must be sacrificed to save myself. Go and sing, if you can, knowing what you know must soon come to pass."

"Pooh, my dear, don't try the tragedy style with me. I shall both sing and dance all the more merrily because I know that you will not force me to a course that would be distasteful to myself. Dora is a brilliant and dashing woman, but she does not suit my taste. In the *tableau* last night, she looked positively coarse beside you."

Mrs. Linwood wistfully said:

"Then you do care for me a little, Louis?"

"I care for you a great deal when you are amiable and considerate. Don't you see we shall then be on even terms?"

"In that case, will you destroy those letters in my presence?" she eagerly asked.

After a moment's pause, he said:

"When the child is safely disposed of, and your will is made in my favour, I will give them to you to dispose of as you may choose. I think that is a fair proposal."

Mrs. Linwood sighed heavily.

"You are looking paler than usual, and a good walk will restore your roses. In the charade in which you are to act to-night, you must eclipse all the beauties here. You can easily do it, for you are more distinguished in your style than any of them, and I am often charmed with your graceful person more than you are aware of."

"Is that indeed true, Louis; or do you only say it to flatter me? Ah! I am very weak—such faint praise from you sounds very sweet, though I do not know why I should prize it. Yet I do. I can fully understand the lines in the old song:

I know not, I ask not if guilt's in that heart,  
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

"That is right, my dainty darling. A loving wife is always an obedient one, and I shall appreciate the sacrifice you are willing to make for me. No harm will come to the child; for I have provided amply for her, and the people she goes away with will rear her as their own."

"Let us talk no more on this subject," said Mrs. Linwood faintly.

He looked at his watch, and said:

"It is eleven o'clock, and I must join the fair Dora. I promise you that I will be less attentive to her in future. I intend to reform, my ways, and become an exemplary Benedict."

He left the room as he finished speaking, and after listening till the sound of his footsteps was lost in the distance, Mrs. Linwood started up and began hastily to prepare for the walk she had said she would take. She descended the stairs and went out by a side entrance that opened on the grounds.

Her lip curled bitterly, and she muttered:

"He can amuse himself, with the consciousness of this great wrong upon his soul! When he knows that Violet is gone, without the aid of his tool, what will be my fate? Shall I be able to maintain my own ground by threatening to expose all, and bringing Judy as the witness to prove the truth of my story?"

The day was bright and unusually warm for the season, and Mrs. Linwood walked rapidly forward, scarcely conscious of how far she had gone, but her attention was on the alert, and her eyes wandered in every direction in the hope that the shabby figure of the person she wished to find would be visible.

Wearied and disheartened, she was about to turn again in the direction of the house, when she saw a small rustic temple formed of the boughs of trees, and the thought occurred to her that if Higgs was in the grounds, he might, at her approach, have taken refuge in this place.

The entrance was on the side opposite to that from which she was advancing, and as her footsteps rustled among the dead leaves that encumbered the pathway, a tall, heavily-built man emerged from the opening in front and moved briskly away.

Mrs. Linwood was certain, from the description given of Higgs by Mrs. Brent, that this was the person she wished to speak with. She found courage to raise her voice and call out:

"Stop a moment, if you please. I have something important to say to you."

The man wheeled and approached her, lifting his hat as he did so.

"I beg pardon, ma'am. I know these grounds is private, and I've no business in 'em; but I didn't mean to trespass. I'm going away now."

"Your name is Higgs, I believe."

The man looked doubtfully at her, and replied:

"I'm not bound to tell my name unless I choose."

"But you will choose to do so when I tell you that I know what brought you here. I am in the confidence of Mr. Linwood."

"Then you must be his wife. He wouldn't go to tell that to anyone else; he told me you was agreeable to our little plan."

"Then you acknowledge yourself to be Higgs."

"Yes, ma'am, I'm that man."

"Would you like to get rid of the charge of the child, and earn five hundred pounds in addition to the sum promised you by my husband?"

Higgs stared at her a moment, and then replied:

"I would, ma'am. If you tell me what you mean, you'll find me accommodating."

"I do not want my niece to be taken so far away, and, in fact, I have already removed her from the power of my husband; so you would not get your bribe under any circumstances, save those I am about to propose to you. I have sent the child away, and she is by this time beyond pursuit; but I do not wish my husband to learn my agency in the matter. I came out in the hope that I might encounter you, and put you in the way to secure what he has offered you, and also the sum that I am ready to give you when I know that you have fulfilled my conditions."

The man listened with a blank stare of amazement and dismay. He stammered:

"The child gone! That's a bad go for me."

"Not if you will be guided by me, Mr. Higgs. You shall gain more than you expect to win by taking my niece away."

"If you'll make that plain, ma'am, you'll find me agreeable."

"Listen attentively then to my directions, and obey them to the letter. The nurse and child are far away by this time, and all you have to do is to send a note to my husband within the next two hours, stating that as you found the woman walking alone with the child, you thought the opportunity too good to be lost, and you have removed her at once; but not without difficulty, mind; for Judy would not allow her charge to be taken from her without a struggle. You can say that you stunned her by a blow, and left her in the road, while you escaped with Violet. You can set out on your journey before we return, for all that is needed is an order for the sum that is lying in the bank ready for you, and that shall be sent to you in the morning, together with a cheque for the five hundred I have promised you."

"That's all right, ma'am. I'll do all you tell me; but I'm dubious about the nuss."

Mrs. Linwood reflected a moment, and then said:

"You must state that you have had the nurse placed where she will be constantly watched over for several weeks to come, and at the end of that time she will be allowed to return and tell her own story."

"Well, ma'am, I suppose I can't do anything better; and I don't deny that I'll be better pleased to get the cash without being bothered with the young one. My old woman wasn't agreeable to the plan anyhow. I had to talk her over considerable before





[MRS. LINWOOD'S COUNTERPLOT.]

she agreed to take a strange child and do for it as her own."

"Send your explanation to my husband from the nearest railway station, and he will be only too glad to learn that you have acted a day earlier than was agreed on. I will find means to send a cheque for the five hundred I promised you before you leave. In the country you are going to, you will be a rich man; and for the aid you have given me to-day, I hope you will be a prosperous one."

"Thank you, ma'am. I ain't sich a bad man as you might think, and I'm going to try and make enough to keep me from helping to steal a child again."

Higgs lifted his hat respectfully, and strode away. "Saved—saved!" she faintly muttered. "My good angel inspired me with resolution to come hither and find that man. Louis little knew what an inestimable service he rendered me when he betrayed his presence in these grounds, and for what purpose he came. I shall have a difficult part to play now, but with the certainty that the poor baby is safe, I shall find courage to sustain it."

## CHAPTER XI.

AFTER a few moments Mrs. Linwood controlled her agitation sufficiently to set out on her return to the house. Her spirits arose, now that the heaviest portion of her burden was lifted. She again entered the house, regained her own apartment, in which a bright fire was burning, and, throwing off her wrappings, sat down to think over her position, and await the arrival of the expected missive from Higgs.

To give Violet up had been a severe trial to her, for Mrs. Linwood loved her little niece with passionate affection, and with great effort she kept back the tears that rushed to her eyes till the hour came in which she could freely shed them without arousing the suspicions of her husband.

Linwood came to her room, and indolently inquired:

"Hasn't Judith come back yet? It seems to me she is staying out much longer than usual."

"Yes, I begin to fear that something has happened to her. She never stayed away so long before. Have you deceived me to save me from knowing that, when I parted from Violet this morning, it was for the last time?"

Her voice was full of emotion, for she felt as if she must shriek aloud, in spite of all her efforts to control herself. Linwood earnestly said:

"Upon my honour, I have practised no such deception, Nelly, and I am becoming as uneasy at the

prolonged absence of Mrs. Brent as you can be. I will go out and look around for her myself."

He left the room, ran down the stairs, and set out on his quest.

He had remained away so long that a thousand apprehensions assailed her as to the cause of his delay. When the door at last opened, Mrs. Linwood eagerly exclaimed:

"Your search has been vain, and I shall never see my little darling more! Speak, Louis; tell me in a word what has become known to you."

"My dear Nelly, do not give way to hysterical spasms when I tell you the truth, for I swear to you that I did not intend to have the child removed before to-morrow. Higgs encountered Mrs. Brent in the woods, and—and I am afraid he used rough means to gain possession of the child, but he thought 'a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush,' you see, and I can't say that I blame him for what he has done."

His wife covered her face with her hands to conceal from him the expression that swept over its pallor. She presently raised her head, and faintly asked:

"How have you learned this, and how was it managed? Judith would not go with that man willingly, yet she has not returned."

"Here is a note from Higgs, explaining in a bungling sort of way the change in his programme."

His wife held out her hand, and with an effort, said:

"Let me see what he says."

Linwood gave her the coarse half-sheet of paper, on which the following lines were written in most eccentric chirography:

"SUN,—I hopes yew won't take no 'fense at my doin' the thing brown wen I had a chane. I met the oman and chile, and thort it best to mak sure o' my prise. I had sum trubble wit the oman, but a nock on her hed settld her, an I tuk peresshun o' the young'un. I thort it best to sen a man back to look arter the nua, and put her whar she can't blab yet awhile. To mak all safe, I must hev the cash afore the bank shets up to-morrer, so please sen me the check. Yer servint, J. Higgs."

The worst dread was gone, the strain lifted from her poor aching heart, yet Mrs. Linwood had no sooner read those lines than the long-repressed emotions with which she had so bravely struggled, burst forth, and she fell back in a violent fit of hysterics. Her shrieks and cries brought many to her door, and assistance was at once rendered by Mrs. Gray herself, aided by her housekeeper.

In reply to the eager inquiries made as to the cause

of her illness, Mr. Linwood replied, with well-acted grief, that he had been out all the afternoon in search of Mrs. Brent and little Violet, who had been absent since eleven o'clock. When his wife learned that the woman had disappeared with the child, she fell into her present condition.

We pass over the exclamations of sympathy, and the useless attempts made by the gentlemen in the house to find traces of the lost ones. Notices were sent in every direction, offering a reward for any information concerning the nurse and child, and it was not until midnight that the house was again quiet.

Linwood had found an opportunity to write a few lines to Higgs, approving of what he had done, and enclosing a cheque payable to the bearer for the sum he had agreed to give him. This was left open on the table a few moments, and ill as his wife was, she arose from her bed, and placed within the envelope a cheque for five hundred pounds, which she had written during the absence of her husband in the afternoon. Mrs. Linwood thus saved herself the risk of sending a separate letter, and with a sigh of relief, she saw him close and seal the envelope preparatory to having it posted at an early hour on the following morning.

The loss of the child, and the deep affliction of her relatives, formed the topic of conversation for many days in the neighbourhood; for Linwood was a good actor, and his wife was really overwhelmed with grief at the wretched necessity that divided her from the child she so tenderly loved.

Nothing was heard of Mrs. Brent for several days. Then a man came from the railway station, a few miles distant, to state that a woman and child answering to the description of the two missing ones had gone on to London on the day of their disappearance. The woman purchased her ticket at his station.

Although Linwood felt perfectly assured that Mrs. Brent was not the person referred to, as others heard this statement, he felt compelled to act upon it, and instructions were sent to an agent in London to take such steps as were necessary for the discovery of the woman and child.

Then his wife, who by this time had recovered outward calmness, played her final card in the game she risked against him, and won. She suggested the Reverend Mr. Boyle as the most trustworthy person to be employed, and her husband carelessly acceded to her proposal, saying:

"It does not signify much into whose hands this sham search is placed. The child is far enough away by this time to render vain all efforts to recover her."

His wife sighed heavily, and wearily said:

"I miss her bright little face every hour of my life, but I am learning to do without her. Now that I have paid so heavy a price for them, I hope you will not refuse to surrender to me those dreadful letters which have caused such heart-burning between us."

"You have earned them, and you are welcome to them," he lightly replied. "They can be of no use to me after what has lately happened. Our interests are identified now, and you have heard my last threat to divorce you, Nelly."

"Then give them to me at once, if you please. I cannot rest till I know they are destroyed."

When this conversation occurred they were at home, having left Mr. Gray's house as soon as Mrs. Linwood was able to travel.

Linwood opened a private cabinet, from which he took two letters written on rose-coloured paper, still exhaling the faint odour of jasmine which had once perfumed them. His wife grew faint and sick as she inhaled it, but she grasped them with eager hands, tore them open and glanced down the pages to assure herself that these were really the letters of which her husband had made so infamous a use.

She grew pallid as death, then blushed crimson, as some of the expressions of adoring love from a man who had no right to address them to her, caught her eye. She hastily thrust them into the fire, and as they flashed into flame she haughtily said:

"Now we are quits, Louis. I warn you over again to refer to any folly or levity of which I may have been guilty, in the vain hope that I might bring you back to my feet. I have sacrificed much to retain my position, and I demand that I shall at least be treated with a semblance of kindness and respect."

Linwood smiled superciliously.

"Of course, my dear. I shall be a model husband now that I know at how high a figure you estimate me."

"I wonder if such mercenary considerations actuated you when you sought my hand in marriage?"

"No, they did not; for my father was then believed to be a millionaire, and I had no occasion to think much about money. I admired you more than any other woman I had known. I believe I was as much in love with you as I can be with anyone; but love is a flower that soon fades—more's the pity. Our compact is an equal one. You give me your fortune, and I permit you to retain the position your own conduct imperilled. The will you executed yesterday secures me from all future contingencies, and I am not ungrateful."

Mrs. Linwood abruptly arose and went to a window, though she saw little enough of what was passing in the street. She had no respect for this man, yet she could not cease to love him, and the words he had just uttered had wounded her deeply.

"If he only knew what pains I have taken to make my fortune of little worth to him when I am gone, he would cherish my life as the most valuable possession to himself. Violet's interests are safe, thank heaven! let what will happen."

The estate of Mrs. Linwood consisted principally of houses, and they brought in a large annual income from their rents. In addition to these was bank stock and railway shares to the amount of eighty thousand pounds. The landed estate she refused to part with, alleging, what her husband knew to be true, that the income arising from it was larger, and the investment safer, than the same amount would be in any other species of property.

Her husband finally yielded to her reasoning, thinking that when the eighty thousand was exhausted, and the additional annual rent proved too little for the gratification of his magnificent tastes, he could at any time dispose of property so valuable as that belonging to his wife. The consent he regarded as a matter of course, when the occasion arose to demand the sacrifice.

He did not know that papers had been prepared in London, under the supervision of Mr. Boyle, which would prove a bar to any attempts to alienate the real estate from the legal heir, and secure her eventual succession to the greater portion of her grandfather's wealth. These papers had been transmitted to Mrs. Linwood without the knowledge of her husband, had been signed by her, and returned.

Her finesse was more than a match for her husband. On her return to London, Mrs. Brent was informed of the ruse by which her mistress had secured her own safety and that of the child, and her story was prepared to tally with the statements made by Higga.

Linwood saw no reason to doubt the truth of the fable she invented to account for her long absence, and Mrs. Brent resumed her place as personal attendant of his wife.

## CHAPTER XII.

As he had intimated, Ashford lost no time in beginning the education of Fantasia. He was delighted

to discover that the child possessed a quick and accurate memory; indeed it was marvellous in some respects.

At first Ashford taught her simple things suited to her capacity; but her progress was so rapid that scenes from dramatic writers were soon substituted for poetry.

Her father had described to her the interior of a theatre; the fine scenery, and magnificent dresses of the actors. He had told her of triumphs achieved by those of her own sex, when every voice rang out applause, and flowers, in which jewels were often concealed, were showered upon the successful actresses. Fanny listened with flashing eyes and trembling lips as he thus descanted, and she often asked:

"Cannot I, too, be as grand as they?"

"Yes, if you will be guided by me," was his invariable reply. "You require years of close study and careful preparation before you will be ready for the great rôle I intend you to play in the dramatic world. You shall be the greatest actress this country has yet produced."

"What mean to be," replied Fantasia, with perfect coolness, for her father's flatteries had taught her to be as confident of her future success as if it had already been attained.

But for this dread concerning her daughter, Mrs. Ashford's life would have been more endurable than she had found it for many years past. She had a capable and faithful servant in the woman sent by Mr. Whitney, and mistress and maid soon learned to understand and appreciate each other.

Violet had found a warm place in her heart, for the child was a most affectionate creature, and after the first few days of wailing over the loss of her nurse, she attached herself to her new protectress with a degree of ardour that won a tender response from her maternal heart.

Mrs. Ashford had always been exquisitely neat in her person, but now her clothing was of better material and more fashionably made.

A little practice had enabled her to regain her old command over the piano, for in her girlhood Mrs. Ashford had been a brilliant performer, and her fondness for music had prevented her from giving it up entirely in the years of discouragement and oppression through which she had passed since her marriage.

In the time of their wooing, Ashford had hung over her as she played, and entreated for one song more to lull his soul in Elysium; and the difference between that time and this was too great to be calmly borne, even by the wife who had drank to the very dregs the cup of indifference and brutality proffered to her lips by the hand that should have shielded her.

Ashford was in the piazza, drilling Fantasia more perfectly in the famous soliloquy of *Hamlet*, which she had already declaimed to him innumerable times, and watched her with supreme contentment.

"A year more of such training as I can give her, and she will be ready for the experiment I intend to make with her," he mused. "With what I can gain for this infant wonder, I shall have enough to carry out my long-cherished plan. Freedom and Paris loom before me, and I see my way clearly to both."

Her father followed her agile motions with his eyes a few moments, and then clapping his hands, cried out:

"Bravo, little sprite! You can be taught to rival them all, I do believe!"

"I am going to do everything those actresses can do, as well as any of 'em, see if I don't," said Fanny.

Mrs. Ashford ceased playing, and she came out to join them in time to overhear their last words uttered. She said, with some excitement:

"I hope Fanny does not understand your meaning, Mr. Ashford. It is wrong to put such ideas into the head of so mere a baby as she is."

"And why so, pray?" he calmly asked.

"Because I will never consent to have my child polluted by the associations to which you would introduce her. Once before I have expressed myself strongly upon this subject, and I hoped you gave some weight to my words."

"I wish I were as sure of going to heaven, as I am of Fanny's brilliant success when she makes her first appearance on the boards," he replied, with perfect nonchalance.

The colour faded out of Mrs. Ashford's face, and she could only say:

"Then heaven help my poor sinless dove! I can only pray to Him to turn your heart from this last and greatest wrong against myself and her."

Ashford uttered a cynical laugh, and went on:

"Really, madam, you are eloquent on the subject. It is a pity you are not one of those gifted ones yourself; for in that case I might have found a charm in my home, which I am sorry to say it has always lacked."

Before Mrs. Ashford could reply, the small voice of Fantasia arose:

"I want to go and be a great actress. I'm going to have a spangled dress and a shining necklace, and I'll have a crown of flowers, too."

With sad earnestness, Mrs. Ashford said:

"So you have been dazzled by the promise of such foolish vanities as those, you poor little victim. I hoped that you would always cling to me, Fanny, and shrink from the thought of leaving me. It wounds my heart to hear you speak thus."

The child sprang up, and throwing her arms impulsively around her, exclaimed:

"Oh, I love you dearly, mother, dearly! It will be a long, long while before I can go away; for papa often tells me I must wait and grow. Don't cry, for I ain't going to leave for a long, long time."

Mrs. Ashford extricated herself from her child's embraces, and holding her at arm's length, looked down upon her, and asked, with a faint tremor in her voice she could not control:

"Has it then been settled between your father and yourself that you are to leave me? Oh, Fanny, the one consolation of my life was the thought that you loved me beyond every other person—that you would cling to me in spite of every temptation to desert me!"

"So I will; I love you best of all the people in the world. I'm going to get lots of money, and you shall have it all."

Mrs. Ashford put the child away from her, and sadly replied:

"I do not wish to frighten you, Fanny; but I must tell you that all the wealth of this wide land could not bribe me to relinquish you to the career your father is so anxious that you shall follow. Do not speak of giving to me from your unhalloved gains."

"You speak as if you have power to defeat my plans, and shape the future of my child to suit yourself. I have the right to control both you and her, and I forbid any interference on your part. Do you hear, madam? I positively forbid any effort being made to frighten Fantasia, or disgust her with the rôle nature has fitted her to succeed in. If I am not obeyed, I will remove the child far away from your influence, and place her among those who will know how to value her gifts, and who will seek to make the most of them."

Fantasia here indignantly broke in:

"You need not say that, for I ain't never going to leave mother behind. I won't never go away from her; you've got to take her when I go—so there!"

"If your mother is reasonable, you will not leave your home for a long time yet, Fanny. This discussion is altogether premature, and you should not have been present when it took place. Run off, now, and find Celt."

Mrs. Ashford sat silent many moments; a painful choking sensation in her throat would have forbidden speech, even if she could have thought of anything more to say which would be likely to influence her husband, who had long ceased to regard her in any other light than that of a bond-slave to his will. She had no respect for this man; she knew him to be a hypocrite who assumed the cloak of piety before the world, without making the slightest effort to rule his daily life in accordance with his professions. He was false to all the pledges he had made to her; he had crushed her almost from the hour of their marriage; yet his yoke was upon her, and she dared not make an effort to release herself from the tyrant who remorselessly pursued his own will, regardless of the suffering he might inflict upon her in gaining it.

Ashford at length broke the silence by saying:

"I am waiting for you to say that you have brought yourself back to a reasonable frame of mind."

His wife sighed, but made no answer; and he went on in that tone of cynical mockery which had become so painfully familiar to her:

"Since you do not vouchsafe a word, I will explain, that you may have no excuse for disobedience. I will allow Fanny to remain with you till she is old enough to be of some service to me in a pecuniary way; but it is solely on the condition that what you uttered before her to-day shall not again be repeated."

After a struggle with herself, Mrs. Ashford replied, in a subdued tone:

"Anything is better than a separation from my only child. I could not live without her, and I warn you that the hour in which you tear her from my side will be fatal to me. I love her beyond life itself, and I will make the effort required of me, deeply as my heart and conscience must suffer in obeying your cruel mandate. On you will rest the sin of carrying out your plans, reckless of everything but the gold you may eventually win. On me will rest the burden of shielding her, as far as possible, from the evils of the position into which you are determined to thrust her."

"I thought you would come to your sober senses," he coldly said.



Mrs. Ashford placed her hand suddenly upon her left side, and her head drooped a moment upon her breast. A livid shadow settled over her features, and for a few seconds respiration seemed to cease. She recovered with a gasp and shiver, and found that in the gathering twilight her husband had not remarked her sudden faintness.

As perfect consciousness returned, a sharp pain quivered through her frame, and she thought:

"It would have been easier to die then, than to live on to endure what is probably before me. But the Creator is good; He will not task me beyond my ability to bear, and he will give me life as long as there is work for me to do."

After the decease of Mr. Falconer, Mrs. Melrose had made a great effort for Mrs. Ashford; she rarely left home except to attend church. She came over to the Vale, and spent nearly a whole morning with Mrs. Ashford, showing that interest and sympathy in all that concerned her, which completely won the heart of the lonely and down-trodden wife.

The old lady made many inquiries concerning Violet, and when the strange child was brought up for her inspection, she examined every feature in the infant face, comparing it with another face which had once been familiar to her; but she shook her head doubtfully, and unconsciously spoke aloud the thought that was in her own mind.

"I cannot see the likeness. She is a pretty creature; but she is not what I expected to find."

"Likeness to whom?" asked the bewildered Mrs. Ashford.

"Oh! to no one in particular. It was only a fancy of Clement's that the child resembles a person we once knew. But my son's recollections of that lady must be very imperfect, for he was but a lad when he saw her last. You have absolutely no clue to the family of this poor little castaway?"

"No, madam; great pains were evidently taken to prevent a discovery of anything that might lead to her identification."

"Would you be willing to give up the child to me, Mrs. Ashford. I should like to have a little girl to rear and educate with Harry; and Clement suggested to me that possibly you would relinquish Violet to my care."

Mrs. Ashford seemed much surprised. She replied:

"It would doubtless be better for Violet if I could consent to relinquish her to you, dear Mrs. Melrose; but the letter that came with her stated that the desire of those who sent her hither was, that I should retain the charge of her. She is not dependent on our bounty, for an ample sum is to be paid for her maintenance. Under the circumstances, I feel bound to retain her as long as I live. That will not be many years, I fear, and if Violet's friends here not reclaimed her before I am called away, I shall be happy to know that in you she will find a friend and protector."

"Let us say no more on the subject, then. You must be a very benevolent woman, Mrs. Ashford, to take this strange child so entirely to your heart in the little time she has been with you."

"I lost a little girl just as she completed her second year; she was the only one of my children that resembled myself at all, and when I saw the blue eyes and golden hair of this little stranger, they reminded me so strongly of what my darling Laura was, that my heart opened to her at once. She was my eldest daughter, and if she were living now, she would be fourteen years of age. Dwelling so many years among the angels, my lost child has come back to me, in even a fairer form than she had worn before. That is why I was so anxious to retain her. You have heard, perhaps, that Mr. Falconer left me the means of making a slender provision for her; should her friends forget to fulfil such promises as have been made?"

"Yes, I heard about that. The old man performed one good act at least, in the course of his long life. It is settled then, that in the event of anything happening to you, I am to claim Violet, and give her a home at Melrose. I intend to live to be a centenarian, and no might you, if you would put aside all morbid fancies."

Mrs. Ashford shook her head, and smiled faintly. "I shall be glad to be spared to watch over both of these children until they are old enough to take up the burden of life for themselves."

"You must come and spend the day with me to-morrow. Mr. Ashford will be away, for I heard my son say that they have both been summoned on the jury, and they must be at Grenville the greater part of the week. Bring the children with you, of course. If you accept my invitation, I will send over my pouter pheasant, with a careful lad to drive you."

Mrs. Ashford seemed to hesitate, and the old lady peremptorily said:

"There, my dear, I shall take no denial."

"I—I must see what my husband will say to it,

before I promise to be absent a whole day from the Vale," was the embarrassed reply.

"Of course Mr. Ashford will say what is right and proper. I shall send the carriage, and I shall expect you to return in it to Melrose."

When Ashford heard of this invitation, and understood that it was purposely given when there would be no rudeness in not extending it to himself, his first impulse was to refuse permission to his wife to accept it; but Mrs. Melrose was not a person to be treated rudely with impunity, and he did not wish the outside world to know how harsh and overbearing he was in his domestic relations. An ungracious consent was given, and the day spent at Melrose proved so agreeable to both ladies, that the elder one insisted on keeping her guests with her during the greater part of her son's absence.

As Ashford was also detained at the county town, his wife, with many misgivings, submitted to the gentle tyranny which gave a bright interlude to the monotony of her life. She thoroughly enjoyed being made much of, and thought how happy she could be, even in the seclusion of the Vale, if she were only appreciated and cared for as she found herself in this pleasant home.

The following morning was bright and warm. It was the first day of September, but the sun beamed as hotly as in the height of summer; and after an early breakfast, Mr. Ashford rode away towards the Roberts farm to purchase a flock of sheep he wished to add to his own.

(To be continued.)

## SOMETIMES SAPPHIRE SOMETIMES PALE.

BY J. R. LITTLEPAGE.

### CHAPTER XXX.

It was not enough for Miss Leech's insatiable hatred of Cathleen Lamotte to slake itself in the delight of watching the disappointed affection which preyed like a vulture upon the heart of the unhappy heiress. It was not enough to see her wedded to the withered old noble whom her young soul turned from with a righteous disdain. No, for Cathleen would wear a coronet, even if she were miserable; and Miss Leech could not bear to contemplate the earthly exaltation of her whom she so unjustly detested.

"No, no," mused the companion, as she paced up and down in the solitude of her own chamber; "no, she must marry the paltry young land-steward, who will spend her money and humble her pride, for he has a temper of his own."

The next day Miss Leech watched like a bird of prey for an opportunity to pounce upon the tutor, that she might poison his mind yet more against the heiress. She was not long in finding the chance. It was just before the luncheon hour. From that repast Earnshaw had always banished himself of late.

The gay troop of visitors were flocking towards the dining room. Men-servants were carrying in hot dishes. Squire Lamotte was affably chatting with his guests. Sir Random Racket and a number of other young gentlemen, loud and noisy, were playing billiards in the billiard-room; the noise of the knocking of their balls and of their shouts came into the wide hall. Cathleen was listening, with an apathetic expression of weariness upon her beautiful face, to the compliments of Lord Beechfield, upon whose arm she leaned.

Miss Leech, watching stealthily as a cat behind one of the great pillars of the hall, saw Earnshaw hastily passing along the passage, carrying his own luncheon on a tray, a simple affair of biscuit, cheese, and a glass of ale.

"So, thoughtful," sneered Miss Leech, "does not like to give the pampered lackeys trouble, I suppose."

She was upon his track almost instantly, and addressed him, as his foot touched the first stair of the flight, in a tone full of humility and gentle pleading.

"Mr. Earnshaw, oh Mr. Earnshaw, I am so sorry to interrupt the privacy of a student like yourself, but if you would excuse me, and allow me the privilege of three minutes' talk with you while you eat your luncheon—"

Earnshaw had never taken any very particular notice of Miss Leech; he had simply noted her as a quiet, ladylike woman, very meek, a little insipid, and who appeared to have no character or opinion of her own. Hardly ten words had as yet passed between the tutor and the companion since they had dwelt under the lordly roof of Dungarvon. Now the tutor bowed, and expressed in courtly phrase, "the pleasure it would give him to be of any use to Miss Leech;" and he led the way into the small sitting room, which he occupied while the house was so full of visitors, put his luncheon on a side table, placed a chair for Miss Leech, and when she was seated, waited,

standing, as it were, for her orders; for Earnshaw, despite the poverty of his position as a tutor, was in all respects a chivalrous and courtly gentleman.

"Mr. Earnshaw, what I say to you is in the very strictest confidence," said Miss Leech.

Earnshaw bowed his head.

"I shall respect your confidence, doubt not," he said.

Just for one moment Miss Leech's heart smote her.

The young man looked so courtly, so noble, so like an exiled prince in his touching humility. She knew that he loved Cathleen completely, and she was about to stab him to the soul. But Miss Leech suffered not long from compunction. Mastering her better feelings, she said:

"Mr. Earnshaw, you are a man and a gentleman, a scholar, and a genius. You are poor—excuse me—I, too, am poor, and all my sympathies are enlisted for you."

Miss Leech spoke warmly. A certain real admiration for the noble-looking young man had crept over her, and the fervour which she showed was not all assumed.

A rich glow dyed the dark cheek of Earnshaw, when the fair-haired lady complimented him thus. What did it all mean?

"The reason I speak," continued Miss Leech, "is simply this. I am partly, and against my will, in the confidence of Miss Lamotte. Mr. Earnshaw, she has designs against your peace. Oh, she is a merciless coquette, whom I should like to—to—"

Miss Leech shut her white teeth close in the excess of her vehemence.

"Mr. Earnshaw, she came to me last night and told me, with a cruel laugh, that she had been trying to make a dupe of you, but that though she felt convinced that you were very spongy upon her, that you were on your guard, and so far she had not succeeded in making you show your feelings." She said she and Lord Beechfield, to whom, I suppose, you know she is engaged, did nothing but laugh at you behind your back, and the wicked old lord has made a bet with her of a diamond bracelet that she won't be able to make you shoot yourself for spite before her wedding-day. She means, I really believe, to try. She means to declare to you that she loves you, to implore you to fly with her, and share her poverty should Mr. Lamotte disinherit her; then, when you believe her, perhaps, even fold your arms about her in your ecstasy, she will fly to Earl Beechfield, claim the diamonds, and very shortly afterwards the two will laugh in your face, hoping that you will put a bullet through your own heart. All this, that wicked Cathleen planned last night. Oh, sir," continued Miss Leech, clasping her white hands, and turning up her eyes, which now streamed with tears, towards the ceiling, "I have stepped out of the line of womanly reticence, perhaps, in warning you, but I have acted from good motives."

"Thank you, thank you, Miss Leech," said the tutor, in a hoarse voice.

He had grown deadly white, and a look came into his dark eyes which made them terrible.

Miss Leech involuntarily shrank from that blaze of wrath.

"It seems to me," said Earnshaw, looking down at the carpet as though he were reading some news, "It seems to me that Cathleen Lamotte is a fiend; but I thank you, Miss Leech; I will be upon my guard."

Miss Leech rose to depart, and looked with hesitation at the young man.

"She will, perhaps, even weep, and kneel to you," said Miss Leech.

"Thank you, madam, she will kneel in vain," replied Earnshaw.

"She may, perchance, kiss your hands or your feet," said Miss Leech.

"In which case I shall request her to desist," said Earnshaw. "But, Miss Leech, it were better that you warned this lady—told her that I was prepared for her attack of pretended affection."

"Ah! no, no, no!" cried Miss Leech, in a fright, and she clasped her hands, and looked imploringly at Earnshaw.

"I must beg you to remember that my situation is my bread. There are few doors open to a struggling, penniless woman, who is defenceless as I am."

Earnshaw was touched.

"Your secret is safe," he said; then he bowed gravely, and Miss Leech left the room.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

Thou sound and firm set earth  
Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear  
The very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
And take the present horror  
From the time which now suits with it.

Shakespeare.

THE SNOW came on when January was about ten days old; the cold set in, and the rigorous reign of winter made itself felt in town and country.

One day the sun got up red in the east, and glowed upon the white expanses of Wild's Chase. The crimson beams fell upon the lattice, diamond-paned windows of the cottage which Oscar Arkwright had hired for the accommodation of his wife and her nurse.

The door fell back, and a man came out into the bright winter morning. A tall man, with thick, venerable-looking, white hair and beard. He wore a large brown overcoat and a woollen comforter; he carried a small portmanteau and a big stick. It was Oscar, in the disguise of an old man.

Oscar locked the door of the cottage behind him, put the key in his pocket, then walked slowly down the strip of garden, rested his portmanteau upon the gate, and holding it there with one arm, glanced up sideways at the little cottage.

A more desolate and lonely place for a little home-stead it would be difficult to imagine. There was no human habitation for two miles. The forest spread about and around it in desolate expanse: only far, far in the distance, the stacks and outbuildings of a farm stood out against the clear, cold sky.

Oscar looked up at the house with an uneasy scowl. Did it contain any dark secret? Was it haunted by the ghost of any crime? Surely he did not see a pale, beautiful, angry face at one of those lattice windows? No, no—it was fancy, the idlest, most romantically absurd, that ever disturbed the waking hours of a sane man.

"I would go again into the house," he muttered, "if it were worth while. Just take another look, to make sure, and—"

A shudder passed over his frame in spite of himself at this juncture, and suddenly shouldering his portmanteau, he passed out through the gateway, and turned his back upon the mournful-looking little cottage.

"I must walk on as far as Ringwood," muttered Oscar, "and show myself there as Mr. Crofton. I must rub my hands before the fire in the little waiting-room at the station, and I must talk about my wife who is staying at Wild's Chase, laid up with a cold and under the care of the old nurse. Oh, yes, I can manage it very well; and so on to London, and there amid the turmoil and crowd of the mighty city, I can retire to my lodgings, fling off this horrible disguise for ever, and then let the Ringwood Station porters speculate as much as they choose about the queer old chap with the white beard, if ever this tale comes to the ears of humanity. The landlord, good man, let me the place through an agent, to whom I went in this disguise to London. The rent is paid a full year in advance, so he won't trouble. I flatter myself that Oscar Arkwright has managed this unpleasant affair with considerable skill, patience, and energy; Oscar, my friend, you deserve promotion, and you shall have it."

Not a shadow of compunction shaded the pure, deep blue of his handsome sinister eyes, not a nervous movement of the finely-curved lip, betrayed that Oscar felt either terror, remorse, or trepidation. He walked the six miles over the moors to Ringwood Station, and entered the little waiting-room, with a glowing cheek that bloomed under his false whiskers. He threw down his bag, came up to the fire, rubbed his hands, and smiled like a happy, brave, innocent old man. There was only a tall, funny-looking old lady, reading a novel through green spectacles, and at the same time nursing a fat poodle upon her lap.

"Some old maid, or eccentric old grandmother," thought Oscar, "she's not worth talking to this morning."

Presently the old lady asked, in a thin, high-pitched voice, if that gentleman would kindly inform her as to the time?

Oscar opened his gold hunting watch. "Half-past ten, madam," said he.

"Oh, then the train starts in half-an-hour," cried the lady, and she settled herself to the book again.

"That old dame has an unpleasant trick of turning those green spectacles upon me," thought Oscar. "She is more employed in watching me than in reading her novel. What does she see in me, the old idiot? Well, she shan't think I am afraid of her. I'll talk to her a bit. Wonderfully fine weather, madam," observed Oscar.

The old lady laid down her book, and gave Oscar a long determined stare.

"It is cold weather," answered the old lady, in her high-pitched voice; "cold, and windy."

"But fine for the season," said Oscar.

"In London the snow will make the streets very dirty to-day, under this sunshine," observed the lady.

"Good time for the omnibuses and cabs," remarked Oscar.

"London is a very dirty place," said the lady; "for my part, I prefer Paris. Do you reside in London, sir?"

"Well, I am a complete bird of passage," replied Oscar, with a laugh. "I have left my wife at our country cottage for the present, while I go up to Lon-

don on business. So I suppose I ought to say that I live in Hants now."

"Your wife!" echoed the old lady. "I hope she is well, sir?"

A cold shudder ran through the frame of Oscar, but looking steadily at the coals, for he would not face the old lady's green spectacles, he answered:

"Well, I hope so, but ladies are fanciful. I dare say she will think herself ill until I come back from London, at the end of next week."

"Then I suppose you have not been married long, sir?" asked the lady in green spectacles; "for it has always been my experience that after a few years a wife is very well contented while her husband remains away."

"I am not a young man," said Oscar, pulling his false white beard and laughing; "therefore, you may naturally conclude that I have been married twenty years."

"I never form conclusions, sir," said the old lady, drawing herself up slightly. "I have never been married myself, sir, and I hope I never shall!"

Oscar burst into a laugh.

"I have no faith in men, sir," continued the old lady in green spectacles. "They marry a woman for her money, and then they want to get rid of her, or they marry her for her beauty, and when that pales they wish to marry another. Now, sir, when my beauty is faded I shall doubt every man who attempts to make love to me."

Oscar could not restrain his laughter; the funny old lady with her green spectacles, hooked nose, yellow front, and large violet velvet bonnet, was one of the oddest, ugliest, most grotesque objects he had ever met with.

"I should certainly recommend you to abide by that decision, madam," said Oscar.

"Oh, then, you do not place very much reliance on the promises and faith of your own noble sex?" said the queer old lady, sharply. "Now, I hope and trust that you treat the wife well, whom you say you have left in a cottage in the country. Poor creature, I really feel such an interest in her, that if you'll just give me her address, I will call upon her on my return from London next week. I shall be returning to finish a visit which I owe at a house in the neighbourhood."

The old lady, looking very intently at Oscar through her green spectacles, must have seen the deadly pallor which spread itself over his cheeks, despite the false hair and paint which he wore.

"I thank you much, madam," he said, politely; "but my wife is in delicate health, and the sight of a stranger would agitate her."

"I am sorry for that," cried the old lady. "I had set my mind on forming the acquaintance of your wife. In the country, sir, did you say? and living in a little cottage, with one old servant. Dear me, what a coincidence, how horribly singular, sir."

The old lady's voice changed into a hoarse chuckle; there was something in her words which startled Oscar Arkwright, and made him bound as if he had been shot. The next moment he could have cursed his imprudence and nervous fear.

"I beg your pardon for alarming you, sir?" said the old lady, drily, without manifesting the slightest emotion at his agitation.

"My dear madam, you did not alarm me in the least," said Oscar, with a cold but nervous smile. "I am suffering from neuralgia in the head, and occasionally it gives me such sudden thrills that I am inclined to jump out of my skin."

"I am very sorry to hear it, sir," remarked the old lady, with the most imperturbable coolness. "And now I think it is time to get our tickets."

Several more travellers now crowded into the waiting-room. With some of these, Oscar, in his character of the elderly Mr. Crofton, seemed pretty well acquainted. He had been backwards and forwards at the Harkham Station during the time that he had been engaged in taking the house and sending in the furniture. He talked now of his young wife, her love of seclusion, and spoke jauntily of the bleak situation of his cottage.

"But in the summer it will be delightful," said Oscar.

Then he took his place in a second-class carriage, and in less than two hours he got down at the Waterloo Station. He at once went down the street and entered an omnibus bound for the City. Hardly was he seated, when, lo and behold, the horrible old woman in green spectacles got into the omnibus, poodle, and all.

"Met again, sir," observed the old dame. "I wonder how your wife is by this time?"

"I wonder very much," said Oscar, coolly.

He was now upon his guard.

Oscar descended at a place in the city where the omnibus stopped. Then he called a cab and was driven by his orders towards an obscure district, frequented much by thieves and criminals. He dismissed

the cab at the door of a murky-looking house. Then he mounted the stairs. This house was let in tenements, and Oscar, in the name of Beech, had hired two rooms at the top. He had sent in furniture from a neighbouring broker's, and while he occupied those rooms, dinner was sent to him from an adjacent coffee-house. When once Oscar found himself in the unswept room which he occupied, he proceeded to fling off his cumbersome disguise. He washed himself thoroughly, for a large pan of water stood in the room, as well as jugs and basins. Having then lighted a fire, he proceeded to burn his wig, false moustache, beard, and his ugly wool comforter. Then, after brushing his own beautiful light brown hair, he went to his valise, which was under his bed, took out good clothes, and dressed himself as Oscar Arkwright.

"Now," said he, looking at his watch, "I must bid adieu to this place for ever. I will write and tell the broker to take away his things at a quarter of the money I paid him for them, and to send the money to Mr. Beech, Post-office, Montrose, Scotland. The rascal will of course hold his tongue and keep silent, unless I bother him for the money, which of course I shan't do. He won't write to Mr. Beech. Then I shall escape from this hateful spot where I have so cleverly concocted my disguise. Once down the stairs and out in the street, nobody will connect me with the old graybeard who went up just now. Stay, I must write to the landlord, and tell him that the key of his charming apartments are in the possession of the broker."

Both letters Oscar wrote and then he passed comfortably into the street, walked along, holding up his handsome head, and feeling very glad to be free of his ugly disguise.

"And now for a bold stroke," said the young man, as he took his place that afternoon in a first-class carriage, bound for Upfield, and the county of the Lamottes. "Before this time to-morrow I shall be betrothed to Cathleen."

Then a gloomy scowl passed over Oscar's face. "Confound it!" he cried, "that horrible old woman in green spectacles is on the platform, and she is coming in here!"

(To be continued.)

## THE BLACK KNIGHT'S CHALLENGE.

BY THE

Author of "Florian," "Cordelia's Fortune," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Prince Hugh and Hashishin proceed to the pavilion, the reader shall learn something of the character and standing of this Old Man of the Mountain.

Hashishin, as he was called by the crusaders, but whose true name was Hassan ben Saba, was a descendant of the Prophet, and having been initiated into a secret society at Bagdad, he worked his way to its head, and at length gained absolute control over the whole wondrous piece of human machinery. He was a follower of Islam, but despised the established church of the Mahometans, claiming himself to be the repository of the only true and saving grace. In time he assembled around him a hundred thousand blind followers, becoming a power before which kings and princes trembled, and to whom the most favoured rulers of the Levant were glad to pay tribute, upon the assurance of personal safety.

He divided his people into three classes: The Husbandmen, who cultivated the soil; the Soldiers, who not only fought for him, but who also lent their services for hire to other provinces; and the *Fidais*, or Guards. These last were by far the most important and favoured of his followers. They were young men, trained up from childhood to the use of arms, taught to believe that their master held the keys of Paradise, and that he could admit them to the realms of the blessed at any moment; and so all his follower were taught. But in the finishing of the education of the guards, or rather, in their final initiation, there was a ceremony as inspiring as it was strange and peculiar.

When the neophyte had been pronounced by his teachers fit to bear arms in the service required at his hands, Hashishin led him up to a dark and dreary cave upon the mountain side, where he conversed with him upon the subjects about which he had been studying. The chief was a keen and quick judge of character, and he readily decided whether the youth before him was of the right sort of stuff.

"My son," the Old Man would say, when about to leave, "you are to spend the night here alone, and ere the morning dawns it shall be decided whether you are fit at heart for the service you seek. If Allah see in you the faithful servant, you will this night be admitted into Paradise. If, before the morning,



you gain no glimpse of heaven, you may go your way, for it is known that you are not worthy. Here are provisions; and your sword is by your side, so you have nothing to fear."

And thus speaking the chief went away, and the neophyte was left alone.

With both food and drink had been mixed a powerful opiate; and as the youth had been kept all day without food, he would be sure to eat.

Once in a very long time it happened that Hashishin had decided not to admit the candidate to the honours of the *Fedats*; and if so, the disappointed youth simply found himself in the morning where he had just fallen asleep, having gained no glimpse of Paradise; and with a sad and heavy heart he descended the mountain to take his place among the soldiers, never dreaming that his chief was responsible for his failure.

The successful candidate, however, met with a different fate. As soon as he had fallen asleep under the influence of the opiate, he was taken by trusty slaves, and borne away to a beautiful garden, where his garments were removed, his body washed with perfumed waters, and a rich garb put on in place of that which had been taken off. If, in the morning, he did not awake of his own accord, he was aroused by one or more of the beautiful maidens who presided over the place; and when he finally arose, and gazed around him, he felt he was indeed in Paradise.

Our Christian knight was even now in one of those gardens—an earthly paradise, built in an elevated valley, and so guarded by nature and art, that no human being, unacquainted with the secret, could either make his way in or out. Here the enraptured youth was allowed to spend the day, wandering from bower to bower, his senses bewildered by the enchanting loveliness everywhere present, while virgins, more beautiful than he had ever seen on earth, hovered around him, desiring to serve him, and singing or conversing, as he might choose. At different points artificial fountains were set up, made to flow with wine, milk, honey, and other delicious beverages; so that, in the midst of all these wonders, the enraptured youth was like one beside himself with utter delight.

When evening came another sleeping-potion was administered, and as soon as it had taken effect his own garments were restored to his body, and he was borne back to the cave whence he had been taken. When the youth next awoke he found Hashishin sitting by his side.

"Allah be praised!" the old man would cry. "I came hither, and found your body cold and lifeless, like a thing dead. I knew that the spirit had fled, and I wondered if it would come back. My son, what have you seen?"

And when the neophyte had described the enchanting beauties of the paradise he had visited, his chief took him by the hand, and blessed him; and from that hour the guardsman firmly believed that the moment he died in his master's service his soul would ascend again to the celestial abode, there to remain for ever!

And now suppose the Old Man of the Mountain should say to one, or more, of his guards:

"Go ye, and kill for me the Sultan of Roum!"

What cared the servant for the consequences? If he fails to do his duty, through fear or negligence, he will never go to heaven; but if he tries to do the work and is slain, Paradise is his at once.

Truly, a wonderful man was the chief of the Assassins; and his friendship was most valuable, as his enmity was dangerous and deadly.

And Hugh of Vermandois had sought this wonderful man, in the hope that he might enlist his sympathy in his behalf. Something of more than passing moment it must have been that could have called this purpose into the Christian's mind; for there was danger in the companionship, as the impulsive prince was yet to learn—aye, at a most fearful cost!

#### CHAPTER V.

WHEN the Old Man of the Mountain and his guest had reached the pavilion, the former touched a small silver bell, the liquid tones of which quickly brought a black slave to answer the summons.

Not a word was spoken. The slave appeared, and knelt before his master, and having received an order given by a few quick motions of the hand, he disappeared, and soon returned bearing a golden tray, upon which were such delicate refreshments as might tempt the most sluggish appetite, and which might yet be borne by the most delicate stomach.

Hashishin set the example, which Hugh was not slow to follow; and when they had eaten and drank the tray was removed, and the host signified that he was ready to listen.

"Good father," said our hero, proceeding at once to the subject which was uppermost in his mind, because

it puzzled him, "I am at a loss to understand how it is that I feel no pain. You saw me when I fell?"

The old man nodded.

"And the rock struck me upon the head—a rock as large as that which crushed the Turk to death?"

The listener nodded again.

"Then whence this freedom from pain?—this wholeness of body, as though no such accident had befallen me? By what miracle have I been saved?"

"It has been no miracle, my son," replied Hashishin, with a kindly smile. "In the first place, your stout armour broke the force of the blow; and the state of insensibility which followed, was rather the result of a terrible shock to the whole system than of any serious injury to the skull. When you fell our enemies were overcome; for those two who had made their way to the top of the precipice had been seriously wounded before you came up; so all we had to do was to bring you hither as quickly as possible, which we did upon the back of your own horse. When we had gained this shelter I caused you to be stripped, and after careful examination I found that no bones were broken, though the whole body had received a strain which would have been serious if not properly attended to.

"Your limbs had begun already to swell, and I knew if you recovered your senses while in that situation your pain would be most excruciating. So I watched you narrowly, and when I suspected that your senses were about to return I administered a powerful but harmless opiate; and under the influence of that opiate you have been kept, while the utmost exertions of care and skill have been expended upon your body.

"Lotions, the virtues of which are almost magical, have been freely applied, and six slaves have been busy, day and night, rubbing your skin. The passes of the hand have been always made in one direction—from the centres of sense outward—and thus I can assure you much of your pain has been carried away. You may smile, Sir Knight; but I assure you I have a slave—and he has been in constant attendance upon you—the touch of whose hand can cure disease; not all diseases, but certain forms. However, you are well, and you owe most of your escape from pain to the slave of whom I speak. I have seen him turn from three hours' work upon your body with his hands so pained and swollen that he could hardly move them."

"Heaven bless the man!" cried Hugh. "How can I repay him?"

"I will tell him that you have blessed him, and that will be pay enough. But be sure he is already amply repaid in pleasing me."

"And now, my lord, how long have I been here?"

"This is the sixth day."

With a loud cry the crusader started to his feet. "Mercy on me!" he groaned, wringing his hands in agony.

"What moves you thus, my son?" asked the Old Man, while something like a smile played around his lips.

"What moves me, do you ask? Do you know what the Christian army is doing at Nice? Do you know what they have a right to expect at the hands of Hugh de Vermandois? and do you ask me what moves me?"

"You are not a philosopher, my son."

"And if I were, how could philosophy serve me now?"

"It would bid you instead of thinking of six days' absence from your camp, and of mourning thereat, to think of the eternal farewell you were nearly bidding the said camp, and of the gratitude due to heaven for the life that is still yours."

"Forgive me!" exclaimed the warm-hearted prince, grasping the old man by the hand. "I will be a philosopher. Heaven be praised that I have a life left to give to the cause of the Holy Cross!"

"And now, my son, we can proceed. But first let me say to you I am your friend while I live, and you may command me. But for you I should, ere this, have lost my power for ever; if not my head. You were seeking me when you ascended the mountain?"

"Yes."

"And wherefore?"

"I heard that, though a follower of the Prophet, you were yet at enmity with the Seljoucides. I wished for the services of a messenger which I believed you alone could furnish—a messenger who could enter the besieged city and bring me word from a person who, I have reason to believe, is held captive there."

"Such a messenger, my son, you can have at any time," said Hashishin, cheerfully. "And I will tell you that there are four of my trusty guards who would lay down their lives for you at your bidding—the four who survived the battle on the mountain. And now, how much of your story are you at liberty to tell me?"

"All of it. Listen, if you have patience."

The old man signified that he was not only willing to listen, but really curious to hear the knight's story, whereupon the latter spoke as follows:

"Among the maidens of my native land the most beautiful of them all was Gertrude, the daughter of Count Raymond of Thoulouse. Not only did she outshine the whole court by the surpassing loveliness of her form and feature, but to a grace that might have become the queen of the fairies, was added a strength of arm and a greatness of soul that rendered her next to invincible in arms. I wonder not that you are surprised. But you must know that upon both her father's and mother's side, Gertrude came of a stock that bred only warriors. In her childhood she conceived a passion for arms; and, at first in sport, her father yielded to her whims. As she increased in years, her love of arms grew stronger, and as each successive stage of development added to her strength of body, new charms were added to her loveliness. At the age of nineteen, she met and overcame in the lists one of the best knights of France; and it was not the thought of doing harm to a woman that stayed his hand, for he truly believed that he was fighting against Hugh of Vermandois; for, when mounted upon her powerful charger, with her tall plumes rising over her casque, the slight difference in stature was not observed. It was almost a year after this that she visited my brother's court; and one day she laughingly challenged me to a joust with wooden lances. At first I thought her not serious, for she well knew that I, though one of the youngest, was yet one of the stoutest knights in France. Suffice it to say that we met, both clad in complete armour. In the beginning I did not put forth my whole strength, and she perceived it, and blamed me for it. Soon, however, I found that I had need to summon all the powers I possessed; and, under the exciting influence of the shouts of the multitude, I forgot my hesitation, and threw my whole soul into the conflict. The noble lady had one important advantage over me. I called myself the best horseman at the court, and so I was acknowledged by my peers; but Gertrude of Thoulouse was the most accomplished rider that I ever saw. She was, in fact, so much a part of the horse she bestrode, that no possible break on the part of the beast, be it ever so wild and sudden, could shake her from her seat. Fortunately for me, I discovered her marvellous prowess before it was too late; and by putting forth the last effort of my power, I overcame her.

"When I beheld that steel-clad form rolling in the dust—cast there by my hand—and remembered the thing of beauty that had been thus overturned, my heart beat with painful emotion, and a dreadful agony seized upon me. Then it was that I knew how fondly I had loved her; and the thought came over me that she must henceforth hate me. But how wrongfully I judged! Instead of blaming me for what I had done, she praised me for a true knight, and told me that her hand was mine if I would accept it; for she regarded me as a knight worthy of her love and esteem.

"And so Gertrude of Thoulouse came to be my promised bride; but her father, who was then preparing for the Crusade, declared that, when we were married, it should be at Jerusalem, upon the site of the Holy Temple.

"When we were ready to start for the Holy Land, Gertrude was at my brother's court, and her father sent word that she should proceed to Constantinople with me; and we set forth together, little dreaming of the evil that was in store for us. Upon the coast of Epirus my ship was cast away; but Gertrude and I reached the shore in safety, where I left her at a fisherman's hut while I went to look after the saving of our stores. During the first night after the wreck, Gertrude was borne away from the hut. That she was dragged away by cruel force, I knew full well; but by whom, and whither, I could not learn. I had rivals—rivals who hated both the lady and myself—rivals who had been overcome in the list by the fair Amazon, and who had never forgiven her for conquering at once their arms and their claim to her hand, nor forgiven me for having fairly won the precious jewel which they had sought in vain. That these false knights had a hand in her abduction I am sure; but since I could not bring an atom of proof, I have not dared openly to make the charge. Yet they are aware of my suspicions, and a secret dread increases their hate.

"Perhaps you have heard how the Emperor Alexius, when he heard of my misadventure, sent a strong force, and caused me to be conducted to his capital. Where he sought to enlist me in his own service. He promised me princely rank and power, and even hinted that he would nominate me as his successor upon the throne; but I would not listen to him. I could not forget my vows, taken when the Pope placed the standard of the Church in my care; and, remembering them, I could not break them. It was at once

time whispered among those knights who had arrived at Constantinople with me, that I had sold myself to the Greek Emperor; but they knew 'twas false when they said so. But of this I need tell you no more. The crusaders had at length all reached the shores of the Bosphorus, and thence we set forth upon our march, which brought us first to the city now under siege.

"The last of our chiefs to reach the rendezvous was Raymond of Thoulouse. I had hoped to be the first to convey to him the intelligence of the loss of his daughter; but somebody had been in advance of me. I had expected that he would blame me, and that he would loudly grieve for his bereavement, for I knew that he held his beautiful child in the innermost depths of his love. But he received me calmly, and I thought, coldly. I quickly saw that he wished not to converse upon the subject of our mutual loss. He has treated me with studied politeness; and I have reason to believe that my enemies have sought to poison his mind against me. But in good time, if I live, I shall know that."

"And now, my lord, I come to the end of the story. On the day that we attacked the city, I gained a footing upon the outer wall, and while there, I saw four stout men dragging a female along upon the inner rampart. I caught a view of her face, and I am sure it was Gertrude of Thoulouse! I saw her but a single instant, and before I could gain the place where she had disappeared, a heavy detachment of the enemy's forces drove me back, and I was forced to retreat for my life. I am sure that Gertrude is a prisoner in Nice, and that when we made the attack she sought to make her escape. And, good father, I must see her. But how? I asked myself this question a week ago, and my judgment said to me, 'If you would enter Nice, or if you would gain intelligence from Gertrude, you must secure the assistance of the Old Man of the Mountain. He alone, of all the world, can safely help you in this.' So I sought you, and the result you have seen."

Hashishin had listened attentively, apparently much interested in the crusader's story; and when it had been concluded, he said:

"Truly, sir knight, yours is a wonderful story. I should almost be tempted to doubt the entire truth of what you tell concerning the Lady of Thoulouse, did I not know, through evidence of my own senses, that among the maidens and wives of the Christians of the West, there have been those who have taken up arms, and joined their brothers and husbands in battle. I know that when Alexius fought against Robert Guiscard, the wife of that gallant chief, the Lady Gaita, not only fought by her husband's side, but actually saved a battle by her daring and wondrous presence of mind. It was when the forces of Guiscard had broken, and were fleeing from the field, that she drove her horse before them, swaying her lance in their faces, and asking them if they would leave a woman to fight alone with her husband, she influenced them to turn back, and, following whither she led, they won the day. And she, too, was so beautiful that the emperor was smitten with her charms."

"Aye," returned Hugh, "I have seen the Lady Gaita, and I can swear that she is fair and beautiful; but her beauty is of a cold and haughty kind, wilful and imperious, while the loveliness of Gertrude of Thoulouse is of that kind that melts the heart, and wins love and homage at once. Oh! she is very beautiful; and she is as good and true as she is beautiful. So I declare, calling heaven to witness the truth."

"Hugh de Vermandois," said the old man, with something of solemnity in the latter part of his speech, "I might hear many men speak as you have spoken, and give little credit to their words; but you have proved to me that you are a brave, true man, and I know that no falsehood dwells in your heart. Whatever may have been your hopes when you set forth to seek me, and however I might have answered had you found me without trouble, can signify nothing now, for new relations have sprung up between us, cementing us, I trust, in a friendship that shall know no treachery. In answer to the story you have told to me, I have only to say, command me, and I will serve you to the extent of my power; remembering, my son, that honour, as well as opportunity, may circumscribe a man's ability."

"I understand you," said the prince, with emotion, "and I should at once prove myself unworthy even of common friendship, did I not recognise and respect the obstacle to my desires, which true honour imposes. And now, this is my request: I want a messenger who can come to my tent, and go thence into Nice—one who will do my bidding while in the city, and return to me with his answer."

"I will do more," returned Hashishin. "I will send to you the four men whom you saved on

the mountain; and you may be assured that they will serve you with their lives, if necessary."

"Are they here?" asked Hugh, looking around as though he expected to behold them at his call.

The old man shook his head, and a peculiar smile flitted across his face. But gradually the smile faded away, and, while a look of solemn meaning overspread his strongly-marked features, he arose, and placed his hand upon his guest's head.

"Hugh de Vermandois," he said, with a grave solemnity, "those men of whom we speak are so true to me that, at my bidding, they would, without even the appearance of hesitation, cast themselves down from the highest precipice of these mountains, fully assured that, on the moment of their mortal dissolution, their freed spirits would be wafted to a paradise of which this is a type. And yet, were they to know that I had this retreat—could they once gain access here in their waking senses—their faith might be sadly, if not fatally, staggered. No, no; they know it not, and they must never know it. To you, who have seen so much, I will say, that the entrance to this garden is so obscure that no mortal can ever find it except through the treachery of someone whom I am forced to trust. The entrance is by a series of caverns, where art has placed obstructions and barriers which the eye of man could never detect, though he devoted a lifetime to the search. And now promise me—swear to me by that which you hold most sacred—that you will never tell to a human being—that you will never mention by so much as a syllable, even to me, when away from here—what you have seen since opening your eyes in this pavilion."

And Hugh made instant answer:

"By the hope which I hold of honour among my fellow-men I swear—by the love I bear to Gertrude I swear—and by my hope of heaven in the time to come I swear—that my lips shall be henceforth sealed touching this place. I will live and speak as though I had never seen it."

"Enough. The men whom you seek shall be with you within an hour after you reach your tent. They will give you to know their purpose, and you may then command them."

As Hashishin thus spoke, he took from a side-board, made of ivory and mother-of-pearl, a small golden salver, upon which were a crystal flask and two small goblets. He filled both the goblets, and passing one to his guest, he added:

"And now, in a draught of such cordial as only the most favoured ones can ever hope to sip, I pledge you my friendship while the life you saved is left to me."

The Old Man of the Mountain raised his glass to his lips, barely touching the pale liquid; while Hugh, never noticing the abstinence of his host, drank the contents of his goblet at a draught. It was a delicious beverage, and in a very few moments he felt a genial warmth spreading through every avenue of his body, while objects about him grew brighter and more glorious.

"Good father, when shall I return? Am I not strong? Tell me: is this cure only seeming—induced by drugs that will leave me weak and pained when their substance is used up; or is it real and substantial?"

"There is no deceit in this, my son. Your body is entirely free from disease, and all of weakness there is you can feel even now. I think this first exertion will so weary you that you will wish to repose a while ere you set forth. After that, you shall depart when you please. I think I can already detect signs of fatigue. You have endured much, considering how long you have remained wholly inactive."

"I think I do feel somewhat weary, good father."

"Aye, I thought so. Seek your couch a while, and when you again arise it shall be to depart from the Christian camp."

The prince sought the couch as his host had suggested, and in a very short time thereafter his senses were locked in a slumber so profound that a thunderbolt could not have aroused him.

#### CHAPTER VI.

PRINCE HUGH felt the gentle breeze fanning his brow, and upon attempting to turn he felt that his bed was hard, like iron. He opened his eyes, but closed them instantly, for the bright sunlight dazzled them painfully. He moved again, and it quickly appeared to him that he was in his armour; and under the influence of this discovery he started to a sitting posture, and gradually opened his eyes to the light of day, and gazed around him. He was clad in full armour; his sword was at his hip, his lance by his side, his buckler resting against his thigh, his helmet at his elbow, while his faithful horse was directly before him, busily engaged in cropping the buds from a mass of shrubbery that found root in a crevice in

the rock; for he was upon a rocky bed—upon the very mountain table where he had fought with the Turks. Could it be? He closed his eyes and opened them again. Yes; there could be no mistake. He arose. There was a sense of languor, of weakness; but upon moving around a little, and inhaling the fresh air, he found himself stronger.

Yes; he was upon the same table where he had fought; but where were the bodies of the slain?

"Dominie!" he cried, addressing his horse, "what is the meaning of all this? Have I been dreaming? Have I lain here since that rock fell upon me? I faith, it is the very spot where I fell, and here is the rock that crushed me down; and," he added, picking up his helmet, "here is the terrible dent where the missile struck! What is the meaning of this strange event? I see: the Turks have removed the bodies of their own, and the Ismaélis have carried away the fallen of their party; while I, friendless and forsaken, have been left here to recover as best I might. But I cannot blame them. They evidently left me for dead, thinking, doubtless, that my own followers would find me in good time. And it has been all a dream—all, all, a dream. And yet, my soul, how real! I can even now hear the tones of the Old Man in my ears, and the taste of the nectar is upon my lips! But it was too beautiful to be real—and in such a place, too! 'Sdeath! I only wonder that the mind of man could be wild enough even to dream of such a paradise in the midst of these grim mountains!"

For some time the knight staggered to and fro, over and anon stopping, as some staggering reflection crossed his mind, and finally he came to this conclusion: When the conflict between the Ismaélis and the Turks, in which he had taken part, had ended, these living had each borne away the bodies of their friends, and he had been left for dead, the Old Man believing that his own people would find his body, and care for it. It required considerable mental labour to bring him to this conclusion, for the events of the experience in the pavilion and in the garden were so vividly impressed upon his mind, that he could with difficulty and much hesitation throw them off. But, on the side of calm reason, how could such an experience have been possible? It could not. It must have been a dream, and nothing more.

And now came another consideration: What should be his next step? He looked at the sun and found it in the east; so he knew it was morning, and hence he concluded that he had lain there upon the rock nearly four-and-twenty hours. The blow which had felled him must have been a severe one, and he wondered how it was that he felt no pain.

"Ah!" he said to himself, as this thought entered his mind, "the pain will come soon enough. It is not time for it yet. In a very few hours, no doubt, my limbs will begin to swell, and I shall suffer enough!"

And he concluded that he had better return to the camp, and take another time for visiting the Old Man of the Mountain.

"For surely," he reasoned, "he will, when he finds that I am alive and well, assist me readily. I have a claim upon his friendship now which he cannot disregard. I will return to the camp before my waking senses begin to groan with pain, and at another time I will seek Hashishin."

Having thus spoken, the knight donned his casque, and, having seen that his armour was all fast, he picked up his lance, and mounted his saddle. A few moments he sat there, with his head bowed, as though yet undecided, but presently he cried:

"No, no, my Dominic, not now. We have been long enough away from the camp. At another time we will make farther search for the white-haired mountain chieftain. Up now, and let us be going!"

With a glad neigh the horse pricked up his ears, and without any direction from his master he took the path by which he had ascended, seeming to declare by his prompt movements that he knew the way, and would keep it.

(To be continued)

**INTERNATIONAL CURRENCY.**—The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce have unanimously adopted a motion to the effect that the present Government should be memorialised with the view of reducing the value of the English sovereign, so that it may be equal to the American 5 dollar piece; and that a coin of the value of 10s. be adopted as a universal unit.

**DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT PIPE MANUFACTORY.**—A curious discovery has been made in the Cathedral close of Lichfield. In clearing the ground for the foundation of some additional building to the bishop's palace, the ashlar facing of the old palace was laid bare at a few feet below the present garden level. Built up against this wall were found the remains of a pipe manufactory. The flue and the floor



of the kiln were very apparent, formed of bricks of a larger size than the present common Flemish pattern. Mixed with the surrounding soil were pipes and fragments of pipes to the amount of one or two hundred.

## FACETIÆ.

TWO PHASES IN A LIFE.  
JOHN, THE DEMAGOGUE.

1.

JOHN stood upon the hustings, the people surged below,  
He told a tale of horror, he wailed a wail of woe;  
"The nobles crush and grind you, hereditary slaves;  
They tread you 'neath their chariot-wheels; they  
fatten on your graves!"

2.

"Their vampire pinions fan you, the while they suck  
your life;  
What, crouch to them like flunkies! War! war,  
unto the knife!  
We want no court or courtier, no proud, blue-blooded  
Don,  
The workmen shall be masters when I'm Honourable  
John."

3.

"When I am in the Cabinet, oh, won't I make a riot!  
They'll give me half the vacancies, in hopes to keep  
me quiet.  
I'll sow you places broadcast; you may depend  
upon  
The workmen getting pickings when I'm Honourable  
John."

4.

John bellowed from the hustings, the people roared  
reply,  
"Down, down with court and courtiers! we'll level  
low and high!  
We're rubbing up our weapons, to charge the lords  
anon;  
The workmen must be masters when your Honour-  
able John!"

JOHN, THE COURTIER.

1.

JOHN gazed into the mirror, and tied his lace cravat,  
And smoothed his gilt-edged lappets, and settled his  
cocked hat;  
He stroked his glossy breeches, and sword that  
swinging shone,  
"This raiment me becometh!" quoth Right Honour-  
able John.

2.

The palace gates flew open, the palace porters  
bowed,  
John never yet in all his life had faced so clean a  
crowd!  
Feathered and diamonded came a lady from the  
throne,  
And by the bran new button, nailed Right Honour-  
able John.

3.

So plump she was and comely, as she were fed on  
roses,  
Her voice was soft and silvery, her smiles like frag-  
rant posies.  
Oh, Royal words have Royal grace, John flushed  
with blush and stammer,  
He could not bray so blatant as with Gaffa or with  
Gammer.

4.

The subtlest of aromas is the atmosphere of Court,  
It muddled our poor Demagogue, like fumes of heady  
port;  
The wily princess watched him, and she laughed  
when he was gone,  
"Mamma, I've drawn the eye-teeth of Right Honour-  
able John."

5.

John gazed into the mirror, and admired his homely  
face,  
"I don't think in the palace it was quite so out of  
place.  
"It's easy to abuse a house, in which one's never  
been,  
"But really things look different, hob-nobbing with  
a Queen;"

6.

"They do need soap and water, my workmen, and  
new clothes,  
"A Court makes one fastidious, I find I've got a  
nose;  
"Let bye-gones all be bye-gones, there must be  
Duke and Don,  
"There must be Prince and peasant," quoth Right  
Honourable John.—*Will o' the Wisp.*

REVERSING THE ORDER OF THINGS.—At a recent meeting of the "Victoria Institute" a paper was read "On the Doctrine of Creation, according to Darwin, Agassiz, and Moses." Would it not have been more reverent if the last of these three names had been placed first?—*Punch.*

"CHEER BOYS, CHEER!"—One of the first things the House of Commons did, was to appoint a committee to control the arrangements of the kitchen and refreshment-rooms, and, very wisely too, to place an Alderman upon it. As another prominent member is French, and Vivian has a convivial sound about it, the prospects of the parliamentary cuisine may altogether be considered good cheerful.—*Punch.*

## IRISH ASSURANCE.

The O'Mulligan (who has been assuring his life):  
"Hah! Another word, gentlemen! Oh hear a good deal about mercantile frauds and financial irregularities, an' I've only this to say: if my ixcitors have any bother in getting this paid, 'faith oil'll interpete int-birely the thin sitting board!—actuairy, siceretary, and ivery man jack iv ye! Make your mimorandum o' that, an' good day t'ye!"—*Punch.*

## LITTLE VIRGILINE.

You are a charming little spire,  
A thing of love and joy and light,  
You're full of sweetness and of grace;  
Sweet is your name, more sweet your face,  
So you shall be our baby queen,  
Oh, dearest little Virgiline.

You're sweeter than the sweetest rose  
That in the early spring-time blows;  
You're sweeter than the violet  
When its young leaves with dew are wet;  
Your very sighs more sweet by half  
Than any other baby's laugh;  
Your counterpane was never seen,  
Oh, darling little Virgiline.

Should I awake from visions bright,  
In the deep silence of the night,  
And see a form before me rise,  
Like that which gladdens now my eyes,  
Oh, I should think it was a fair  
And blessed angel of the air,  
A being sent down from the skies  
To dry my tears, to hush my sighs,  
And towards the vision I would lean  
With rapture, loveliest Virgiline.

Within the dark depths of your eyes,  
As in the blue depths of the skies,  
I gaze with ecstasy, and lo!  
Bright, winged things flit to and fro,  
And their rich music-tones are flung  
Like bird-notes when the year is young.  
Ah, dear one, if you are no good  
And beautiful in babyhood,  
If you have such bewitching power  
Ere your life's bud has burst to flower,  
What will you be at sweet sixteen;  
Canst tell me, baby Virgiline? G D P.

## WOMAN'S HOME.

We hear a good many sermons now-a-days, from the text that the chief duty of a woman is to render home attractive to her husband. No doubt any good wife will make this her crowning pleasure; but where duty is in question there is another phase of the matter which is sadly overlooked—the duty of the husband to the wife. As a very small portion of his time is spent in the house, where his wife's whole life is passed, it would seem quite as important that her convenience and tastes should be consulted as his. In their capacity as head of the family men think that the ordering of the house naturally belongs to them. They build to suit their own taste and convenience, and lay out the grounds to suit their own fancy, and manage things generally, with some deference to their wives' wishes, it is true, but a great deal more to their own. And sometimes their caprices conflict woefully with the comfort of the household.

The home should belong to the wife, and she should plan the house, arrange the furniture, lay out the garden, and order all the details. She knows from experience, better than her husband can possibly know, what arrangement best conduces to her housekeeping conveniences. It would be just as absurd for her to undertake to be the architect of his warehouse, and to place the desks, drawers, and pigeonholes of his counting-house, as for him to select the spot for her cupboards. In the same manner, if trees are to be cut down or left standing, or flower-beds to be laid out around the house, her taste should be consulted first, for the sight of these things must delight or chafe her all the day long, while they are

of little practical consequence to the husband in the evenings, which are his chief time at home. Again, the homestead should belong to the wife in fee-simple—she has a right to the home in which she rears her children, and ought to be assured that it can never be torn from her by any of those reverses of fortune to which, in this country, all are so liable. Women all feel this, and if their comfort and convenience were made paramount at home, if they were quite certain that the spot to which they are so often advised to confine their aspirations really belonged to them, and was wholly within their control, they would gladly assume the responsibility, and strive with much greater alacrity than they do now, to force their husbands to acknowledge the ability of their generalship, and to appreciate the delights of home.

## STATISTICS.

NATIONAL DEBTS.—The public debt of each of the principal foreign countries, and the amount per head of population respectively, was as follows:—Russian Empire in 1866, 274,644,770*l.* and 8*l.* 1*s.* 1*d.*; Sweden in 1865, 4,114,888*l.* and 1*l.*; Norway in 1865, 1,854,157*l.* and 1*l.* 1*s.* 10*d.*; Denmark in 1865, 14,862,465*l.* and 8*l.* 18*s.* 9*d.*; Prussia, old provinces, in 1866, 42,123,064*l.* and 1*l.* 13*s.* 8*d.*; Oldenburg in 1865, 6,315,585*l.* and 2*l.* 1*s.* 2*d.*; Hanover in 1865, 6,423,955*l.* and 3*l.* 6*s.* 3*d.*; Brunswick in 1863, 1,707,707*l.* and 5*l.* 16*s.* 5*d.*; Bavaria in 1866, 29,669,267*l.* and 6*l.* 3*s.* 5*d.*; Saxony in 1865, 9,912,049*l.* and 4*l.* 4*s.* 10*d.*; Wurtemberg in 1866, 7,033,911*l.* and 3*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.*; Baden in 1866, 9,258,728*l.* and 6*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.*; Electoral Hesse in 1864, 1,845,892*l.* and 2*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.*; Ducal Hesse in 1865, 228,916*l.* and 6*s.* 4*d.*; Hamburg in 1865, 4,222,897*l.* and 16*l.* 16*s.* 5*d.*; Holland in 1866, 81,790,799*l.* and 21*l.* 17*s.* 10*d.*; Belgium in 1865, 25,070,021*l.* and 5*l.* 0*s.* 7*d.*; France in 1866, 566,680,057*l.* and 14*l.* 18*s.* 9*d.*; Portugal in 1865, 42,930,472*l.* and 9*l.* 17*s.* 4*d.*; Spain and Balearic Islands in 1865, 163,927,471*l.* and 10*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*; Austria in 1866, 268,965,064*l.* and 7*l.* 5*s.* 3*d.*; Italy in 1865, 211,503,298*l.* and 9*l.* 8*s.* 3*d.*; Greece in 1867, 14,000,000*l.* and 12*l.* 15*s.* 3*d.*; Turkish Empire in 1867-8, 69,142,270*l.* and 1*l.* 19*s.* 1*d.*; United States in 1866, 579,880,391*l.* and 18*l.* 8*s.* 9*d.*; Brazil in 1866, 80,762,289*l.* and 3*l.* 1*s.* 3*d.*; Chili in 1865, 2,933,405*l.* and 1*l.* 15*s.* The national debt of the United Kingdom in 1866 was 802,842,949*l.*, averaging 26*l.* 15*s.* 9*d.* per head of population. In the year 1868 it was 749,101,428*l.*—viz., funded debt, 741,190,328*l.* (exclusive of the charge of terminable annuities, the estimated capital of which in March, 1868, amounted to 47,930,222*l.*); unfunded debt, 7,911,100*l.*

## MISCELLANEOUS.

CLOSING OF THE ROYAL DOCKYARD.—It is now definitely settled that the Royal Dockyard at Woolwich will be closed on the 1st of October next, Commodore-Superintendent Edmonstone, O.B., having received an Admiralty order to that effect. The whole of the establishments will be shut up on that day.

CHRISTMAS WEATHER IN FLORIDA.—Oranges were frozen solid on the trees at Augustine, Florida, on Christmas day. The thermometer at daylight stood at 20 deg. above zero. It afterwards touched 17 deg. In a climate where even white frosts are unusual, this was very severe. Last year, at the same time, the Florida ladies were dressed in lawns.

RECENT INSTANCES OF LONGEVITY.—The Times obituary contains the names of five persons who have died at over eighty years of age, one of them at ninety-two. Among the others are Mr. Wardrop, surgeon to George IV., and who was eighty-seven, and Mr. Gye, formerly M.P. for Chippenham, who was eighty-nine. Mr. Wardrop is understood to have left some MS. which throws much light upon the character of his royal patient.

GAS AND WATER SUPPLY CORPORATIONS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS.—A case of considerable interest has been heard at the Carlisle County Court. It was an action brought against the Corporation of Carlisle to recover 5*l.* for damage sustained by reason of the defendants cutting off their supply of gas. The Corporation are the proprietors of both the gas-works and the waterworks, and the plaintiffs having fallen into arrears of water rate to the extent of 7*s.* 4*d.*, the defendants cut off their supply of gas. The plaintiffs submitted that the defendants had no right to stop the supply of gas for any default in respect of water. The defendants contended that they could cut off the supply of gas at any time. The judge held that they could not. "If," he said, "they agreed to supply a customer, a contract was implied which could only be invalidated by his breaking their rules and falling into arrears for gas."—Verdict for the plaintiffs for 20*s.*

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**THERAPEUTICS.**—It is too lengthy for quotation.  
**ELLEN CROWE.**—Your verses are not up to our standard.

**EMINA.**—It is not proper to ask the gentleman in, if the hour is late.

**A. F.**—If not gone too far, black pepper, rubbed well into the fur, will destroy the worms.

**AN UNHAPPY WIFE.**—You will get the information by applying at Scotland Yard, Whitehall.

**Q. R. S.**—1. We can hazard no opinion in the matter. Consult the medical list. 2. Handwriting good.

**YU-LE.**—Your lines were not up to our standard, otherwise they would have been accepted.

**RICHARD S.**—a. Your lines show considerable poetic feeling, but are scarcely up to the mark. Try again.

**WILLIE.**—It would be better to consult a medical man. We cannot give you a receipt to cure the disease.

**A CONSTANT READER.**—You cannot learn ventriloquism. If you have a natural aptitude, practice will improve you.

**A NORTH EAST-ENDER.**—There is no remedy that we know of. Repeat the application in fine, dry weather.

**ETICURAN.**—The use of a leaden comb will gradually darken the hair, and will not injure it. All dyes are bad, more or less. Handwriting tolerable.

**RUE.**—If you can prove cruelty, a magistrate will grant you a protection order, which will prevent your husband from annoying you.

**G. W. F.**—A gentleman ought to precede a lady in going downstairs, that is if the stairs are not wide enough to permit of his giving the arm.

**LOUISE.**—If your friend should happen to be on board the vessel on its arrival in London, he will receive the letter.

**MILICENT.**—You must mean the Earl of Huntingdon. His country residence is Gaultier Cottage, Waterford, Ireland.

**JIM.**—Your handwriting is good, and suitable either for a merchants' or lawyers' office. Your taste, and the chances you have, ought to guide you in the selection.

**G. F. F.**—1. British America. 2. Neither your handwriting nor your spelling would qualify you for a clerkship.

**KATE D.**—1. One connected with the fitting out of ships, ship-rigger, &c. 2. Handwriting legible and lady-like.

**ONE IN TROUBLE.**—1. We do not know. Consult Debbert's Fecundity. 2. We do not think the two families are related, as the names are spelt differently.

**W. G.**—The Helioscope, a peculiar sort of telescope, prepared for observing the sun so as not to affect the sight, was invented by Christopher Schiener in 1625.

**A. C. K.**—The Great Eastern was built at Millwall. She is 680 feet in length, breadth 85 feet. She is capable of carrying 10,000 troops, with their equipments, 600 first-class, and 1,800 second-class passengers, besides the crew.

**HELEN.**—The want of economy has involved thousands in misery, and in those homes where extravagance or carelessness prevails there can be neither comfort nor happiness.

**EDWARD.**—Baton is a short staff or truncheon borne by field-marshal as a symbol of their authority. Batons are also used by drum-majors of infantry regiments; but in this case it is of great length, and inferior in value and decorations to the one used by field-marshal.

**CLARA ANNIE SHARP.**—If your delay in laying the information before a justice of the peace that he is the putative father can be satisfactorily accounted for, you can obtain a summons against him to answer the complaint. After the lapse of fourteen months from the birth of the child you cannot proceed.

**FRANK.**—The Ecuador, a South American Republic, was founded in 1821, when the Columbian Republic was divided into three; the other two being Venezuela and New Granada. The population of Ecuador is 1,140,400, of which 70,000 are in Quito, the capital. General Flores, president in 1859, was defeated in battle by General Flores in 1860.

**D. Y.**—Date-marks on Silver.—I read some time ago that the date of silver plate might be readily ascertained from the marks on it; that the letter designated a certain year, and that all plate made prior to (I think) 1784 can be readily distinguished by the want of some mark which was adopted in that year. Can any of your correspondents give me information on this point? The marks on silver are various: 1. the maker's mark; 2. the hall mark; 3. the

duty mark; and 4. the date mark. The first shows the maker, the second the place at which the piece was stamped, the third the reign to which it belongs, and the fourth the year. Mr. W. Chaffers has published a book on this subject, containing copious tables. The third of the marks is the head of the reigning sovereign, and the fourth is a letter of the alphabet. For the marks of the Goldsmiths' Company, the following table may be sufficient:—1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, 1685, 1686, 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692, 1693, 1694, 1695, 1696, 1697, 1698, 1699, 1700, 1701, 1702, 1703, 1704, 1705, 1706, 1707, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1711, 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1727, 1728, 1729, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1735, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, 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